


HIGH
IDEALS

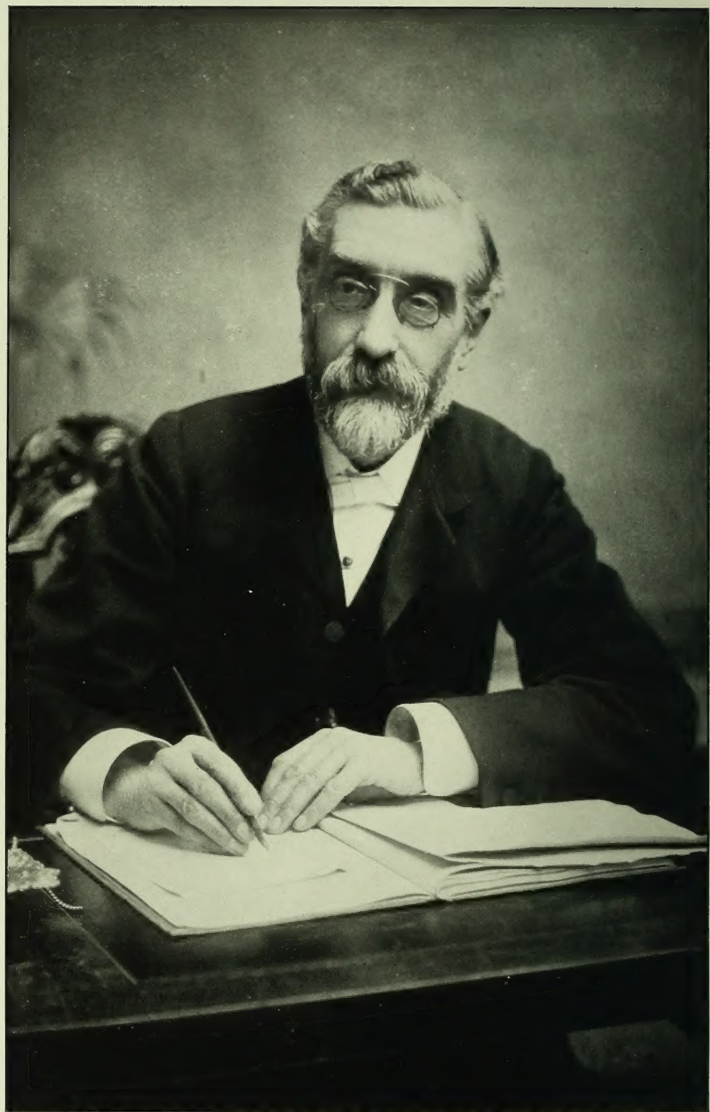
SERMONS
by the
Rev. H. E.
Bottomley
of Coventry





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HIGH IDEALS.



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SERMONS

BY THE

REV. HENRY E. BOTTOMLEY

(Of Coventry).

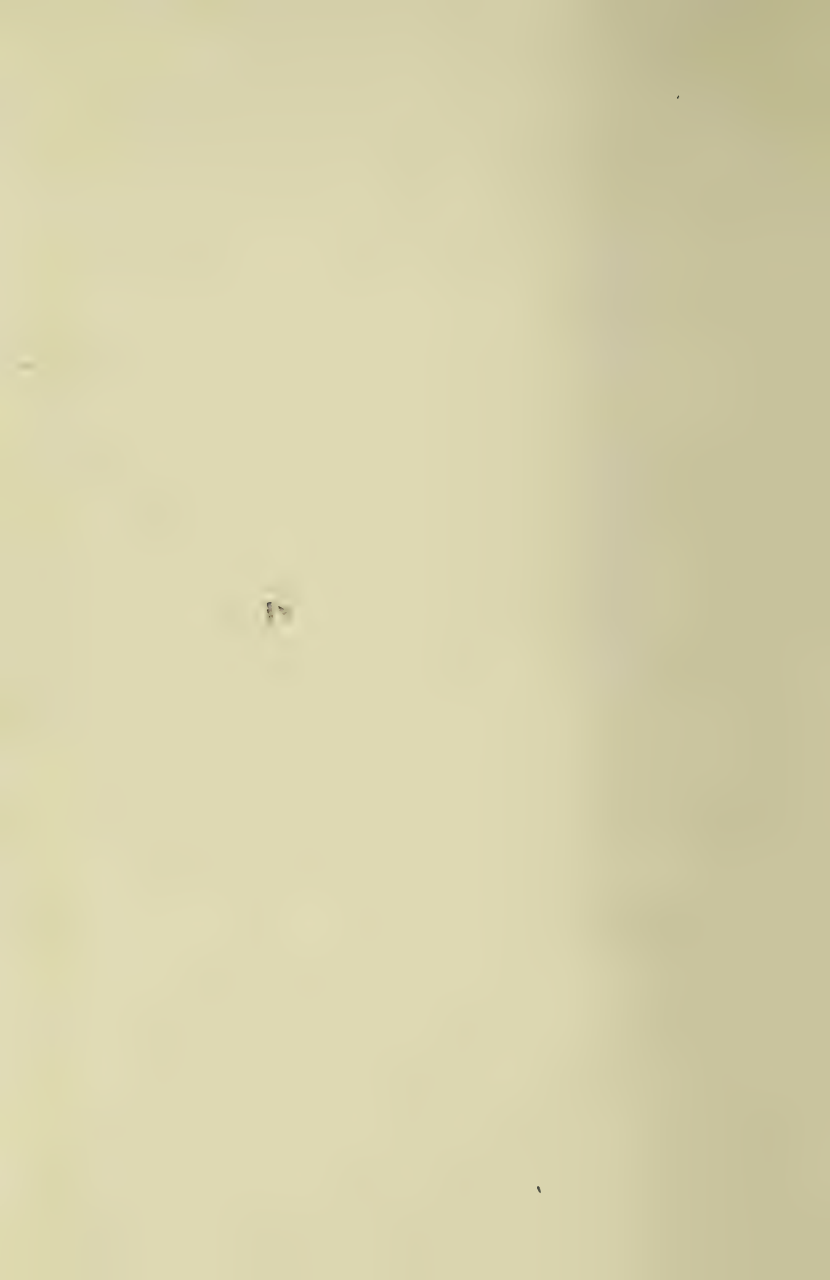
“He, being dead, yet speaketh.”—*Heb. xi. 4.*

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—
1903.

TO THE PEOPLE
AMONG WHOM HE LABOURED
THESE SERMONS
OF THEIR MINISTER
ARE DEDICATED.



CONTENTS.

						PAGE
MEMORIAL	...	...	...	...	...	I
THE MAN AND HIS WORK	...	...	...	...	...	7

Sermons.

I.	CHRISTIAN COURTESY	...	...	...	...	19
II.	THE LAW OF LIFE THROUGH DEATH				...	27
III.	ALABASTER BOXES OF KINDNESS			...	...	40
IV.	"UPON THE TOP OF THE PILLARS WAS LILY WORK"	...	...	...	...	48
V.	ACCEPTABLE PRAYER	...	...	...	...	59
VI.	THE SEPULCHRE IN THE GARDEN			...	...	68
VII.	ADDRESSES ON THE BIBLE (I.)			...	...	77
VIII.	" " " (II.)			...	...	86
IX.	" " " (III.)			...	...	94
X.	APOSTLES AND PROPHETS OF MODERN TIMES (CHARLES KINGSLEY)					102
XI.	" " " " (JOHN RUSKIN)					114

In Memoriam.

H. E. B.

He set his soul on things above.

Heart-loyal to the Lord he served,
Nor faith nor conscience ever swerved
From youth's ideal of fervent love.

The truths he saw he fearless taught;
Nor diverse faiths and customs blamed.
For others, as himself, he claimed
The liberty of honest thought.

Rich, in the highest wisdom, he,
Pure, peaceable, long-suffering, true.
No aims that end in self he knew;
For others' cares his heart was free.

He walked with God. For us he stood
The high reminder, all the days,
How great beyond all other praise,
The praise of being greatly good.

God's Angel stooped with sudden sweep
And rapt him from our mortal sight.
He turned on him a face of light.
We only, in his shadow, weep.

M. McM.

MEMORIAL.

THE late Sir John Seeley, in his greatest work, written in early life, "Ecce Homo," concludes his memorable chapter on the "Enthusiasm of Humanity" by remarking that Christ created a succession which the world scarcely beheld before of "holy men." "Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries this higher-toned goodness, which we call holiness, has existed. Perhaps the truth is that there has scarcely been a town in any Christian country since the time of Christ where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation . . . and if this be so, has Christ failed, or can Christianity die?"

Our Free Churches during the past century have certainly not failed to produce this distinguished type of spiritual nobility. No one who knew the subject of this memorial volume, as the present writer and many others have been privileged to know him, would hesitate to accord him this highest rank. Coventry has been dowered for more than a quarter of a century with the ministry and sacred influence of one among these sons of light.

My acquaintance with Mr. Bottomley began in the year 1872, when I entered Cheshunt College. He was thus my senior by several years; but as I entered for theological instruction only, I was brought into frequent association with him in the theological classes. I can now vividly remember his study near the end of the middle corridor, with

its well-stocked bookcase containing elegantly-bound copies of Neander's Church History, his College essay prize ; and with the window opening out on a large chestnut tree and adjacent pines, and all the rich, sylvan beauty of the grounds in which the College stands. There was neatness, order, and a prevailing sense of quiet refinement in the room. These, and the genial welcome of the owner, who was usually ready to put himself at one's disposal, gave the place and opportunity a rare charm, and made intercourse an easy path to tread, with an outlook on the happiness of personal friendship as a not too distant goal. I recollect that we used to collate together our class-notes on Dr. Reynolds' course of lectures on the Fatherhood of God, which he greatly appreciated, sometimes lingering with admiration over a phrase or thought that pleased him, or occasionally diverging into laughter when some humorous aspect or suggestion gleamed across the fancy of either of us. I think the general verdict of my contemporaries would have been that the personality of Henry Bottomley, beyond that of any of us, inspired confidence and esteem among his fellow-students. It was not brilliance in conversation, nor intellectual pre-eminence, nor unusual hilarity of temperament, nor was it athletic prowess (for which his physical constitution did not fit him), but it was the spirit of genuine goodness, affection, and unselfish character which drew us toward him, and won him many friends. I extract an illustrative passage from a letter written to him by a contemporary, Rev. T. Rhys Evans, of Brighton, who died twelve years ago.* It bears date, January 13th, 1874, and refers

* Taken from the Biography of T. Rhys Evans by Rev. R. Lovett, M.A. (pub. Jas. Clarke, Fleet Street), p. 25 foll.

Memorial. 50

to "the good account" Mr. Bottomley's letter to him had given of his "own position and prospects at Bristol":—

"The magnetism of intense friendship is a wonderful thing. . . . I saw quite enough of you to have the deepest respect and attachment in a quiet way, with a trust which it is not in everyone to inspire, and which was quite strong enough to affect me with a real sense of loss when you left. I shall always remember that our closest connections were brought about by 'constitutionals,' that there was a good deal of the æsthetic about them, that they dealt largely in the beauty of skies and streams, the song of nightingales, the view of little pine-groves by moonlight."

I regret that at this distance of time I am not able to characterize his preaching during those College days with adequate clearness. I can, however, call to mind that it possessed the qualities of sympathetic penetration and insight, as well as of devout spiritual tone, in the presence of eternal realities that marked his preaching in later years, and were, in fact, salient qualities of his inner life. They won for him, in those early days, an entrance into many households of rich and poor alike, and he became thereby an acceptable preacher in many towns in the South of England in which the ministrations of the senior students of the College were sought. These qualities gained for him the affections of the members of the village Church at Stanstead Abbots, where for several years of his College course he took the pastoral oversight of the people as their "dean," while the students of the College preached in the pulpit by turns.

One particular incident, to which I have heard Dr. Reynolds refer in subsequent years, exhibits the char-

acter of his preaching. In Cheshunt, as in other theological Colleges, there was a preachers' Homiletic or Sermon Class, in which a discourse is delivered by a student, and then subjected to friendly, yet often drastic, criticism by his class-mates, and last of all by the President. These conditions are not usually found to be stimulative of eloquence. Indeed, the ordeal of the Homiletic Class has been even known to leave the future effectiveness of the sermon itself not wholly unscathed. Nevertheless, on one occasion, Henry Bottomley produced, even under such conditions, an effect unknown before or since. His discourse searched and touched the hearts of those who heard him. For once the critics were dumb; and, after a few cordial words of appreciation, Dr. Reynolds closed that memorable meeting of his class with prayer.

In 1874, both Mr. Bottomley and myself quitted Cheshunt College, and for some years we saw little of one another. In an early year of the eighties his father came to reside in Cheshunt, and occupied a picturesque house, shaded by trees, on the hill-slope adjoining the College. At this time I was one of the teaching staff, and thus had frequent opportunities of renewing old associations during the visits which he paid to his father. In the beautiful garden of his father's residence, and under the shadow of its magnificent elms, we often met and talked; or we re-kindled old memories as we roamed over the Hertfordshire hills and shaded lanes. It was during one of these visits that a terrible domestic tragedy befel him. His little boy and girl were carried off by diphtheria while staying at their grandfather's house. And the latter also was gathered into the quiet homeland. The interval which separated these sad events was brief. They lie, grandchildren and grandfather,

Memorial. 50

buried close together, on "a slope of green access," with Dr. and Mrs. Reynolds and former students of the College in that retired *campo santo* that overlooks St. Mary's Church and the College tower.

These events drew us still nearer to each other. Frequently, in subsequent years, my friend came to spend a day or two in the spring or early summer at my house, or I dwelt for a short interval under his roof at Coventry, and rambled with him towards Stoke, and renewed the happy associations of early boyhood. No days in all the year's calendar were happier to me than these. His character seemed to be graciously moulded for friendship and healthful intercourse. His interests in literature and social life were wide, and his sympathies never restricted or self-centred. He loved to hear his friends talk, and, when he spoke of others, the bitter carping tone was never heard. His judgments respecting men and policies were always generous and hopeful. His faith in God inspired his views of life and human destiny, and coloured his estimates of individual character and worth. I seemed to tread a sunny path, and never to depart far from the mind of Christ when he was my companion. He was ever a lover of human souls and of God, even from his youngest manhood, when, as Sunday School teacher at Union Chapel, Islington, he took his lads for walks, or invited them home with him to tea, or, when engaged in ragged School work at Spitalfields, he attached the boys to himself as their personal friend. And the same character of genuine unselfish love revealed itself throughout his life down to the latest days of his fruitful pastorate in Coventry.

Others more closely associated with his work in Coventry will be better qualified to describe the various aspects of his public life as God's minister

and citizen. It is difficult—indeed, impossible—to portray in a single brief sketch the features of a life so attractive, so strenuous, and so varied. No portraiture can be complete. Yet all who knew him intimately would say that the main elements of power in his ministry lay in his beautiful, refined, and helpful personal intercourse with men, women, and children. We loved to have him with us as our friend, in our home, with our most intimate associates, by our table, at our fireside, in the storm, and in the sunshine. And whenever and wherever he came, he brought with him the pure light of a clear unselfish nature, into which Christ's own soul had entered and reigned supreme. And when he swiftly passed from our midst, we each of us yearned to have him with us still, and yet could only look wistfully after him, and say within ourselves—

"Go thou
And take thy praise; and be not far to seek
Afterward, when I follow, if I may."

OWEN C. WHITEHOUSE.

THE MAN AND HIS WORK.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LATE

REV. H. E. BOTTOMLEY.

NOW that the first shock of grief is past through the sudden removal by death of our much loved minister, we may perhaps the more calmly and accurately survey his work and character. As a rule, it will be found a man's faults are magnified while he is living, and his virtues when he has passed away. Especially is the latter the case in the event of sudden death. The closer we have been associated with the departed, the more ready are we to forget all our points of difference, all flaws of character. The remembrance of the good qualities of our friend crowds our memories, until we lose all sense of perspective. An indifferent life appears good enough for Heaven, a saintly life the perfection of goodness. It is only as time passes that we bring our calm and sober judgment to bear, and form a true estimate of the life and character of our late associate.

The time is still too near to form an altogether unimpassioned judgment of our late pastor; and yet in his case the more we think of it, the more we are convinced that time will not cause us to greatly modify our present judgment. For the most

❧ The Man and his Work.

part a true and just estimate has been formed of the man and his work.

It is now about twenty-seven years since Mr. Bottomley was invited to become the pastor of our Church. We had just passed through a troubled and anxious time. It seemed as though the religious work of our Church was hopelessly damaged, but the advent of Mr. Bottomley soon put us right again. The new pastor entered on his work with a firm faith in God, in his people, and himself, and with all a young man's ardour. He set out with the conviction (a conviction, by-the-bye, which never left him) that if his ministry was to be a success he must have a grip on the hearts and souls of his young men. All who have passed through young manhood at our Church will testify that while Mr. Bottomley was attached to all sections of our Church, he was specially interested, and spent himself more for the welfare of young men, than in any other part of his work. Advancing years did not weaken that feeling. He was exceedingly tender with a young man's limitations. Only a few days prior to his death, when a complaint was made about the unseemly behaviour of one or two young fellows, he quietly said, "Don't be hard on them, we can't expect them to be as staid as older people."

From first to last Mr. Bottomley had an intense belief in the power of the pulpit. He believed that the special function of the Christian minister is to preach. He had no sympathy with any attempt to shorten sermons. He spent much, I should say the major part of his time, in his study, preparing sermons, and all his sermons evidenced careful preparation. I never remember listening to what may be termed a "slip-shod" sermon. There was real, honest, hard work put into *all* his sermons. One

The Man and his Work. 50

sermon especially of his I shall never forget, on "Christian Courtesy." He seemed himself the embodiment of that Christly grace.

He had an almost overpowering sense of responsibility in the pulpit. He never illustrated a point in his sermons so as to provoke a smile. This was the more surprising to those who knew him intimately, because he exhibited a keen sense of humour in ordinary conversation. He would not only laugh at a good joke, but would enjoy making one. It arose from his conscientious conviction that the man in the pulpit should be serious to a degree. He held that the pulpit was not a fitting place for light talk, even though it might serve to illustrate a serious point.

No minister was ever freer from studied manner and affectation in the pulpit. He would never use a phrase to tickle his hearers. Sound, solid Christian teaching, given in a solemn manner, was his characteristic as a preacher, so little wonder he was never what may be termed "a popular preacher." In all his dealings with others he was eminently tactful, even in his preaching. He certainly had the courage of his convictions, no man more so, but he didn't think it wise to be always expressing his convictions. There were times when his gentle, quiet nature was aroused to unsparing criticism, to the surprise of his opponents and the delight of his friends. Yet even then he was always the Christian gentleman. Doubtless it was the tactful spirit he usually adopted, and his loving, peaceful manner which kept our Church so free from strife. During the whole of Mr. Bottomley's twenty-seven years' pastorate we have never had a disorderly meeting, or a meeting in which differences of opinion left enmity behind; this is

as The Man and his Work.

the more remarkable since some of the prominent men in our Church have expressed views which some Churches would have considered heterodox enough to warrant their expulsion from the Church, but the tact of our leader and his broad charity have saved the situation and helped to a proper appreciation and a kindly regard of each other by the two extremes. In our Church we have learnt the lesson (thanks mainly to our late pastor) to agree to differ.

No man ever clung more tenaciously to a well-formed opinion than Mr. Bottomley, but he was a wise opportunist and knew how to bide his time. Usually he so spoke and worked as to ultimately gain his ends, never offensively pushing his views, and always having sufficient charity to give credit for conscientious motives to those who differed from him. Charity, in its broadest sense, was one of his most distinguished characteristics. Using the word in the narrower, but commonly accepted sense of relieving distress, he was one of the most charitable men I have ever known. He must have given a large part of his income to the poor and needy. We sometimes complained of the frequent appeals for help he would bring before us, but it was not so well known that he was usually one of the largest subscribers himself; indeed, he never advocated giving without being prepared to lead the way. He was ever a large and unostentatious giver. When any special collection was made at his Church, he invariably came into the deacon's vestry and placed a liberal offering on the table. He was, moreover, with one exception, the largest subscriber to the Church weekly offering fund. His liberality was not confined to his Church; as a citizen he was always a generous subscriber to public institutions.

But it was in seasons of affliction or trouble of

The Man and his Work. 50

any sort that Mr. Bottomley was at his best. He gave too much time to study and attendance at meetings to be able to be a frequent visitor to our homes; but on the first intimation of affliction, he hurried to the sick room and soothed the sufferer with his sympathy and prayers, and his prayers at such times seemed a benediction. In the public services Mr. Bottomley was at his best in prayer, but in private he was a veritable prince with God. All his natural hesitancy of speech vanished; he seemed to talk with God as a child to a dear father. There was a quiet subdued utterance, a look of pain on his face, as he pleaded for the relief of the sufferer, as though the pain had entered into his own soul, then a calm confidence in the infinite love and mercy, and a gracious committing of the sufferer to the care of the Saviour. Saint and sinner alike in the hour of affliction were greatly helped by Mr. Bottomley's ministry of prayer. But he not only sorrowed in our sorrows, he joyed in our joys. He was ever a welcome and genial guest at our weddings; especially was this the case when (as was not infrequent) the happy pair had grown up under his ministry. Any success achieved by his young people was always followed by the hearty congratulations of their minister. Among the most cherished recollections of my own lads was his evident gladness, expressed in the happiest manner, at any advancement in their business careers. What others called luck, he termed, "Well earned success."

It is only as we calmly consider the position of our Church when Mr. Bottomley was called to be its pastor that we are able to see the large measure of success which attended his ministry. At the conclusion of his twenty-fifth year of service he was able to say, "The Church roll has risen from 212 to

The Man and his Work.

450, or excluding the branch Churches, from 146 to 338. There have been 877 additions to the Church during these years, of whom 659 have joined the Mother Church. I have married some whom I baptized as children. There are only thirty-three members on our Church roll who were members when I first became your pastor, or, if you include the branch Churches there are only 50." I am sure it troubled Mr. Bottomley not a little that the last two years had been unfruitful in adding to our Church roll.

We are indebted to Mr. Bottomley for the splendid buildings in which we worship, but for him we should still be in the cramped buildings of old Vicar Lane. It was a large undertaking at the time of its inception, and only by the persistent advocacy of Mr. Bottomley, in the face of much lukewarmness on the part of the congregation was the scheme carried through, and in a few years paid for by the almost unaided efforts of the congregation. And on the whole what a noble record of work Warwick Road Church can show. Nearly all the new and vigorous organizations now existing are due to the initiative of Mr. Bottomley. The P.S.A., P.M.E., Christian Endeavour, Mothers' Meeting, Girls' Club, Young Men's Club, etc., are monuments to his irresistible activity. Never a year has gone by since we opened our new buildings without an effort by the pastor to start a fresh society. As the winter's work began we quite looked forward to Mr. Bottomley's "new annual." We could not keep pace with all his ventures, but several came to stay, and after some years of working are flourishing more vigorously than when they were started, a blessing to ourselves and many beyond our borders. Whilst taking a lively interest in our new societies,

The Man and his Work. 50

Mr. Bottomley never neglected the older and less noticed societies; indeed, the smaller the society, the more eager he was to give a helping hand. He had a great appreciation of the quiet workers at Warwick Road, and was frequently trying to get *all* workers not to narrow their activities by working at one thing, or for one society only. He could see the tendency, and the danger of absorption in one's own pet society, especially if it seemed a great success. His own broad mind and sympathies embraced the smaller societies just as much, or more, than the larger. Many a quiet worker was encouraged in his or her work by the notice and help given by the pastor. He was, I know, specially interested in our own Tract Society, and it seemed fitting that his last prayer should be for that society in the presence of its devoted members.

Time will not permit a notice of Mr. Bottomley's public work. Our local papers and public bodies have testified to his numerous activities as a citizen. Next to the special work at Warwick Road, he spent himself for old Coventry, civic work of a high order, every citizen giving his best to improve the tone of city life he believed and practised.

Little wonder such a strenuous life should have told on such a weak physique. It was only the cool, calm, collected manner in which he did his work that prevented an earlier breakdown. It was clear to his friends that he worked beyond his strength. In justice to his deacons, it should be known that they urged him twelve months ago to have assistance in his ministerial work, and prepared a scheme for his relief; but there were difficulties in the way, which seemed insurmountable. Mr. Bottomley himself did not realize the strain and stress of his

The Man and his Work.

labours, and expressed himself as quite able to cope with his work. It is pleasant to think of the happy relationship which always existed between Mr. Bottomley and ourselves. He bore testimony to that feeling in these words: "Our union has been a happy one. No bitterness, no schism, no divisions, no quarrels have troubled us. I do not believe there is a Church in the county that can tell of more peace and unity than we for a quarter of a century have experienced here. People sometimes talk about the trials of a minister's life, occasioned by the behaviour of others—of the pain caused by coldness and obstruction from those from whom sympathy might have been expected; of disloyalty on the part of those who should have been loyal and true. Of these troubles, I am thankful to say, I know comparatively little."

Speaking of his deacons, he said: "Truer, more loyal and brotherly men it would be difficult to find." How could it be otherwise when we had such a Christ-like personality to deal with?

This brings me to a consideration of the man. Of him it may be truly said: "He allured to brighter worlds and led the way." His manifest Christian life was far more powerful and convincing than his sermons. His gracious personality was a life-long sermon, which cannot be forgotten.

The testimony of all who knew him is, that "he was a good man." "Think well of what a good man should be, he was that."

A friend of mine, now away from Coventry, who had a long connection with our Church, writes: "You will never have another minister more gentle, sympathetic, earnest and Christ-like. I mourn his loss as the loss of a dear friend."

Another man who knew Mr. Bottomley well, and

The Man and his Work. 50

was baptized by him, also writes: "He was unmistakably an ideal man, a man with wonderful tact, always affable, and easy to approach, ever ready to help, generous and unselfish."

Still another writes, who is now far away from Coventry: "When I lived in your city, Mr. Bottomley was a man I always looked up to with trust and confidence. I always felt I could tell him things; and in later years, when I looked back upon that younger time, amid much that seemed to me hypocritical (my own opinion only), he was at least a genuine man."

It would be easy to multiply such testimony. Even a superficial acquaintance with our late pastor led people to say, "He is a gentleman"; a closer knowledge, "He is a Christian gentleman"; and intimate fellowship, "He is a true follower of the gentle Jesus."

We often put on the memorial cards of our friends a verse from the good old Book, which does not always accurately describe our friends, for we are all very charitable in our judgment at such a time; but the verse on the card of our late pastor is true, every word of it, and no lapse of time will alter that opinion.

"He walked with God.
He was not, for God took him."

Yes, God translated him from earth to Heaven.

In the first flush of our grief we felt indeed "he was not," but now, thank God, we feel that he still IS. Though his body is in the grave, "his soul goes marching along," and we are encouraged to believe that many to whom he preached will keep step with him.

O what a glad surprise it would be to him to

as The Man and his Work.

find that some for whom he yearned and prayed, and who still seemed untouched by his earnest loving words, had taken note of his Christly life, and, through that life (made more real to them by its tragic close), had become followers of the Christ he loved so much. That would indeed be a joy. Let us have faith to believe it will be so, then indeed we can say,

“He, being dead, yet speaketh.”

THOMAS H. ADAMS,

Church Secretary.

July, 1903.

SERMONS.

Christian Courtesy.

(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, July 2, 1899.)

I PETER III. 8.

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

I WISH to take the last clause only of this verse this morning, and speak for a little time on the grace of Christian Courtesy. I say grace, because I am sure it is a grace, and as such we ought to seek it, and to strive to develop it, and to let it manifest itself in our words and actions and life. It is not Christianity, but it is meant to be one of its fruits, and one of those fruits by which men may know we are Christ's disciples, and by which we may commend the Gospel of Christ. The roots of plants are hidden underground, but they appear in their branches and flowers and fruits. We know by these that there is a root and life in them. And it is by their fruits we know the disciples of Jesus. The best evidence of Christianity is the character it produces, and among the ingredients of Christian character, its graciousness, its courtesy, is one of the most beautiful and attractive. It is an illustration surely of the transforming power of Christianity that it is Peter, whom we know chiefly as the rough, unpolished, impulsive fisherman of Galilee, who lays

of Christian Courtesy.

such stress on virtues such as these. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." The same spirit which changed John the firebrand into John the Apostle of love, converted Peter the boaster into Peter the teacher of meekness, gentleness, courtesy.

Are we in the present day characterized by Christian Courtesy? I think not. There are some who appear to think there is a kind of virtue in bluntness. In asserting the individuality and importance of the man they overlook the gentleman. In insisting upon the democratic principle, "I am as good as you," they often overlook the correlative, "You are as good as I." There are others who consider it a sign of high breeding to be cold and proud, to stand upon their dignity.

The studied politeness of former days forced men into a kind of unselfishness in small things which the manners of to-day will never teach. It is Christian Courtesy that makes the Christian gentleman.

Courtesy! The word itself is interesting. It means the manners of those belonging to the sovereign's court. It implies that the higher the station in life, the more of graciousness and urbanity and thought for others is there to be expected. It expresses that *noblesse oblige* which was once more believed in than it is now:—that the greater our privileges, and our possessions and advantages, the greater the responsibility with regard to our relations toward others. The word, however, long ago outran its original meaning, and courtesy was recognized as something that might be shown by all, and that appeared more often in the humbler than in the nobler circles. Thus Milton writes, in his days:—

Christian Courtesy. 20

" Shepherd, I take thy word,
And trust thy honest offered courtesy,
Which oft is sooner found in lowly sheds
With smoky rafters, than in tapestry walls
And courts of princes, where it first was named
And yet is most pretended."

Remembering, however, the original meaning of the word, how much is implied when we begin to speak of *Christian Courtesy*! It means the demeanour, the manners of those who move in the highest of all societies, who dwell in the House of the Lord; who frequent the Presence Chamber of the King of kings. It declares not merely that "nobility obliges," but "Let your manner of life be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ"; "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." It calls upon us to show the kind of company we keep, by the graciousness, the kindliness, the sympathy, the charity we evince. "Having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous."

What are some of the marks of Christian Courtesy?

(1) I would say:—it springs from a keen recognition of our relation to others. It bids us "look not only on our own things, but also on the things of others." It bids us "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." It recognizes the law of Brotherhood. It remembers that others have just the same needs that we have, and are just as precious in God's sight. That the least that those who are strong and healthy and vigorous can do is to care in some way for the sick and aged and suffering; and the affluent to interest themselves in the lives of the poor; and the refined and cultured not to shrink from the unrefined, but to seek to elevate them. It has been well said that

❧ Christian Courtesy.

the difference between high breeding and good breeding, *i.e.*, Christian breeding, is this:—High breeding gracefully insists upon its own rights, good breeding gracefully recognizes and cares for the rights of others. There can be no true Christian Courtesy that is not based on sympathy with those less highly favoured. Peter links the two together, "Be pitiful, be courteous." Think of others. Care for others. Let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you. Bear ye one another's burdens.

Again (2) Christian Courtesy is seen in the little things of everyday life. It is easy enough for most of us to be courteous on great occasions; or when filling some official position; or performing some social function. There is, moreover, a certain politeness of language and address belonging to our everyday life and business relations that we should be ashamed to be deficient in. But it is in the little things that Christian Courtesy comes out—in the graciousness, the kindness, the sympathy we put into all—it is not so much the thing done, as the way in which it is done. One bitterly cold morning Henry Ward Beecher, the American minister, was accosted in Broadway, New York, by a ragged little match-seller, to whom he had often spoken a kind word. Seeing the lad shivering as he came towards him, he stopped and talked a little, and presently asked him, "Aren't you very cold?" "I was, sir," replied the boy, "till you came by." Only a kind word, but it warmed that ragged little fellow's heart. And the coming of some people into a room is often like a beam of sunshine. It is not that they do great things, but they put so much grace into what they do that others instinctively feel the brighter and better for their presence.

Courtesy in little things—how far it goes to make

Christian Courtesy. 50

life pleasant. It is what the bloom is to the peach ; what the scent is to the rose ; what the smile is to the human countenance. Like charity, it begins at home, or ought to ; and yet, as a matter of fact, many people are less polite and courteous to those who are nearest and dearest to them than they are to strangers. "Keep that for home, John," said a wife to her husband, when they were walking out together one day. "Keep what?" he enquired, "Why that bright smile with which you greeted those people we just met." Yes, keep the best for home ; the kindest words, and the brightest look, and the warmest sympathy, and the most genial behaviour. Let the home be the great practice ground for the exercise of Christian Courtesy ; show it as brothers and sisters, as parents and children ; show it especially in our treatment of the aged, and in the honour and reverence we pay to age. One day, when we ourselves are old and feeble, we may perhaps sigh for some of the thoughtfulness and consideration we were too sparing of ourselves.

It is thus in the little things of daily life that you must look for the marks of Christian Courtesy. It cannot exist where there is pride, or selfishness, or uncharitableness. It is born of that charity that "suffereth long and is kind, that envieth not, that vaunteth not itself, that is not puffed up, that doth not behave itself unseemly."

(3) Christian Courtesy is opposed to all self-importance. It does not seek the most important places. It is not offended if apparently overlooked. It is not resentful. It can make allowances. It can give others credit for sincerity and honesty even when their views are opposed to our own. Nor does it in Church life and Christian work hold itself aloof in proud independence. Some seem to go on the

❧ Christian Courtesy.

"all or none" principle. If they cannot have things all their own way, they will have none of them. Christian Courtesy asks not—What is my due? but what service can I render others? It is affable, kindly, easy of access. The holiest man I ever knew was one of the most courteous. His great talents and large heart never appeared more beautiful than when seen in connection with the modesty, and graciousness, and sympathy, and thoughtfulness for others, which shone through all. It is not only what one does, but the way in which one does it, that touches people and wins them. It is pleasanter to take a refusal from some people than to extort a promise from others. And why? Because the one, though obliged to refuse the request, yet gives sympathy; the other does not.

How, then, may we acquire and manifest this grace of Christian Courtesy? Certainly it has to be cultivated. It can no more be acquired without effort and practice and perseverance than can any other gift or grace. Depend upon it, those who are distinguished most by it have taken pains to develop it. It is something to be thought about, and prayed about, and practised every day.

But yet, necessary as practice is, it is not in itself enough. There is a more excellent way than that. There is something that shall make us anxious and eager to practise Christian Courtesy. The best way to obey the command, "Be courteous," is to seek to have the mind of Christ, to go to the school of Christ, and listen to Him, and learn of Him, and look on Him, and associate with Him. There is a law we call the law of assimilation, by virtue of which we grow like those with whom we associate much, and by which the weaker nature is unconsciously influenced and moulded by the stronger. If

Christian Courtesy. 20

you move in certain circles, you insensibly catch their spirit and manners and mode of regarding things. Now the secret of Christian Courtesy lies here. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." He was the perfect embodiment of all that is gentle, and thoughtful, and condescending, and gracious, and kind. He taught it. He declared its blessedness. He practised it. He was its perfect illustration. "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." "I came not to be ministered unto but to minister." "I am among men as he that serveth."

Be much with Him. Learn of Him. Commune with Him. Talk with Him, and listen to Him, and the law of assimilation will unconsciously work, and you will grow like Him, something of His graciousness and thoughtfulness will appear in you, something of that beauty of holiness which was so conspicuous in Him. After all, we can only give what we have. The mind of Christ must be in us if we are to manifest Christian Courtesy. No mere artificial politeness of manner can take its place. We want first to see things more as He saw them; to regard them from His standpoint. To see, as He did, something wonderfully precious in the human soul, however degraded and defiled it may have become. To see, as He did, not only what man is, but what he is meant to be, and may yet become. To regard our fellow-men with something of the feeling that He had, when we read again and again that, "seeing the multitudes, He had compassion on them." To realize, as He did, that the time here is very short, and that it behoves us therefore to do all the good we can in it, and put all the kindness and charity into it ere it pass away. The grace of our Lord Jesus was manifest not only in what

❧ Christian Courtesy.

He did and gave, but in the way in which He did it—the sympathy, the love He put into it. And the infallible receipt for Christian Courtesy is to learn of Christ, to go to His School, to associate with Him, to pray for His Spirit, to abide in Him. As you bring your own poor, cold hard nature to Him, He will quicken and inflame it. As you abide in Him, you will unconsciously grow like Him; and men, as they see the graciousness and unselfishness and beauty of holiness that stamp your life, will know that you have been with Jesus, and have learnt of Him, and they will glorify Him in you.

The Law of Life through Death.

(Sermon preached at Highbury Chapel, Bristol, June 15, 1873.)

JOHN XII. 24.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

THE last great week of our Lord's ministry had now arrived. A week that began with song and gladness, but that ended with the Cross and the sepulchre.

Never, perhaps, during Christ's brief life upon earth had His prospects seemed brighter in the world's estimation than on the morning of the day when these words were uttered. For the first time since the raising of Lazarus had He returned to Jerusalem, and His reception by the populace must have gratified the most ambitious of His followers. The journey from Bethany had been one long triumph. The air had resounded with the hosannas of the crowds that hurried out to meet Him. The priests were startled as they heard the voices of the children singing His praises in the Temple. His enemies were exclaiming, in dismay, "Behold, the whole world is gone after Him." It was the last blaze of sunlight before the coming storm. It was the earnest of that triumph which Christ was even then riding on to achieve, but to achieve in a way that the crowd who went out with Him could have little imagined.

But it was also a day full of great predictions. During its hours, and probably while teaching in

❧ The Law of Life through Death.

the Temple, there were, we learn, certain Greeks who desired to see Jesus, probably Gentile proselytes of the Gate who were in the habit of coming up to the feast. They had gone with their request to Philip, and some have supposed, from his name being a Greek one, that he may not have been altogether unknown to them. Philip had told Andrew, and the two had gone together to Christ. Alike at the beginning and at the end of His life was our Lord sought by the representatives of the Gentile world. At the beginning there came the wise men from the East; at the end there came these Greeks from the West. Both were probably true seekers after Jesus, having more than an idle curiosity, both eager, probably, to know whether this were indeed the ideal King for Whom the world had long been sighing, the perfect Man towards which philosophy had been aspiring. And the one went back to tell that they had found a Child lying in its cradle, the other that they had seen a Man hanging on a Cross. To the Magi, a token possibly that the true King was he who had the child heart; to the Greek, that the perfection of manhood was to be found, not as they had striven to teach, in beauty of appearance, but in truth, in righteousness, in self-sacrifice.

And so when Jesus learnt that these representatives, as it were, of the outside world were waiting to see Him, He seems to have felt at once the deep significance of the moment, His whole nature was stirred. To Him it was a sign from the Father; a sign of His incipient glorification among the Gentiles; an earnest of the ultimate triumph of His work, and out of the fulness of His soul He exclaimed, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." Is it possible to conceive a little the prophetic vision that might in that

The Law of Life through Death. 50

moment have flashed across the mind of the Redeemer? The wide world opening to Him as the broad field for the Gospel seed ; its mountains trodden by the feet of those bringing glad tidings and publishing peace. Its sons coming from afar ; its daughters nursed at the Church's side. The little one becoming a thousand, and the small one a strong nation ; until, with Divine glance, He could already see the whitening harvest of souls, and hear the song of the reaper angels, and the shouts of the Harvest Home. And then, almost suddenly, it would seem as though, between Himself and that future triumph, in the very path to it all, there stood out, sharp and clear, the one way by which it could all be accomplished, and the only way—the Cross ; the Cross of shame. And as He recognized the price that must be paid for so glorious a victory, as the chill shiver of approaching death seems to have crept over the Saviour, what wonder that His human soul became so agitated, that the cry went forth from Him to the Father, " Now am I troubled, and what shall I say ? "

But the lesson contained in it all, true alike for Jesus and His humblest follower, is the one great lesson of the Kingdom of God, that glory must be won by the Cross ; that life eternal comes by self-renunciation.

In seeking the symbolic teaching, then, of these words, it is well to notice that the symbol Christ selects is one from nature.

We know how continually Christ was drawing lessons from the natural world ; how He seemed to lift the veil from the material world and show the Divine truths enshrined in it. So that now the chirping of the sparrow, the beauty of the field flower, the countless sands upon the shore, the stars that

❧ The Law of Life through Death.

look down upon us from their infinite heights, all suggest lessons of the care and providence and love of God. But there was a peculiar appropriateness here, showing the marvellous adaptation of Christ's discourse to His hearers. With the Jew His appeal was constantly to prophecy ; to the predictions concerning Himself ; convicting them out of the mouth of their own teachers. But in dealing with the sensuous spirit of the Greek His appeal was to nature, that nature which they had profoundly observed without even yet learning its full significance ; and in the harvest from the decaying seed-corn, in the new growth springing from the death of the old, Christ points not to the Jewish, but to Creation's prophecy of the mystery of atonement and sacrifice ; the law of life, true life by death ; of glory by self-abnegation.

1. The symbol is true of Christ Himself with reference to His great redeeming work.

We have here the great purpose of the Incarnation. Of Him alone may it be truly said that He came into the world that He might die. His death was the great purpose of His life on earth. The atonement, which had been running all through His life here, reached its great climax. Take away that, and many of our Lord's references to Himself are simply unintelligible. "I am come to give My life a ransom for many." "Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture."

With other great reformers martyrdom has been an accident in their history, or the inevitable result of their endeavour to stem the course of the world's mad career. They have stood in the path of the world's rough wheel, and the wheel has crushed them. No man ever faced death with greater calmness, or welcomed it with greater faith than

The Law of Life through Death. 50

Socrates, but it formed no necessary complement to his teaching. The world was not the richer, but the poorer, for his removal. No philosopher could exclaim to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away." But with Christ all centres round the Cross. Take away that from this history, and you have a brilliant setting, but the gem is gone. Prophecies of old in Israel; mysterious signs and symbols appearing from time to time in altered form; vague presentiments and dreams of the heathen world; attempts at vicarious sacrifice, at self-immolation; what else do they all mean? Even nature herself in the suffering with which each new birth is ushered into the world; in the decay through which each spring-time she emerges with new life and freshness and beauty; every golden harvest field that is to-day waving in the autumn breeze, and that has arisen from the perished seed-corn, all speak of the same mystery of a redeeming death. Precious to me is the life of Jesus. I could not part with that. Those marvellous touches of sympathy, of compassion; that feminine tendency that was never effeminate; that patience and endurance unutterable; those days of uncomplaining toil; those solitary prayers upon the mountain top; those mysterious intimations of His Divine power; that unerring analysis of the heart of those with whom He came in contact; that calm assertion of His own superiority; those narratives that make us feel that, dwelling with this Divine Power, He had a deep, broad human heart, most Divine, most Godlike, perhaps, at those times when most truly human. When He took the little ones up, and laid His hands on them, and blessed them; when He burst into tears at the grave of His friend, and wept with the weeping sisters; when He shrank from the shame, the humili-

of The Law of Life through Death.

ation of dying, and prayed that if it were possible the cup might pass. And then that fierce conflict with the Evil One, when He suffered being tempted, and prayed for deliverance. The life of Jesus! I cannot part with that. In my times of difficulty, of trial, of temptation, I turn to it, and find here a true guide, a true friend. I feel I can tread no path that One has not trodden before me. In my hours of loneliness I read of One Who, when friends were deserting, and none could sympathize, was able, amid all the isolation of His spirit, to exclaim, "And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me." In the day of bereavement I can find here the true significance of sorrow, and the meaning of the mystery of suffering. The most precious history that the world contains is the life of Jesus. But is this enough? Can you find here relief from every anxiety, the satisfaction of every craving? Is there still no sense of a burden worse than that of sorrow; of a loneliness that comes not from isolation of spirit, but from wrong-doing, a loneliness that we dread, because it seems to bring us close to God? Is there no desire to be healed of our guilt; no feeling of the want of some atonement, some One upon Whom I can lay the burden of my sin, and exclaim, "Behold, O God." If I want to know how my conscience may be purified, my heart cleansed, my sense of righteousness satisfied, I must go to the Cross of Jesus. And there, and there alone, can I learn in this mystery of sacrifice the awful character of sin, the eternal claims of righteousness, the unconquerable power of love. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

And then the world has ever been enquiring after God. Often in the strangest, wildest ways, and yet

The Law of Life through Death. so

the one true interpretation of it all, its mystic rites, its ascetic practices, its desires after absorption into the Divine has been surely this—"Oh that I knew where I might find Him." Vague desires and aspirations after something that they had not yet grasped, and yet that they felt by mysterious intuition; gleams of light that pierced their gloom, and told them that somewhere the sun must be shining; and never did these intuitions find truer expression than when Philip exclaimed, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." It was the Father-God for which the world had been crying; and in the Cross it was that the world had its truest revelation of the Father; learnt that His Name was Love, and that the offspring of Love must be Sacrifice. Had Christ lived on through a long and glorious succession of years, manifesting His Divine power, and then ascended again in triumph to the Heavens, there might have been an entire reformation, for the time being, of society, and His personal influence would have been unbounded; but the great heart-ache of mankind would still be untouched, and the Father unrevealed. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

And it is the Cross that has proved the one magnet for humanity, that has attracted alike the cultivated scholar and the uncouth barbarian; that became ere long the standard around which men rallied in their battles for the faith; that is still all-powerful—powerful when every other inducement has lost its wonted force, and friends can no longer sympathize, and loved ones no longer accompany; when the hand forgets its cunning, and the mind its boasted grasp of thought. Oh, the need of the world, the panacea for all its ills, the regeneration

❧ The Law of Life through Death.

of its society, its only hope for time and for eternity is a crucified Saviour.

And if we would win that world for God! if we would overcome the mass of iniquity that seethes around us; if we would go forth manfully and fearlessly to meet the future that often looks so lowering; if we would roll back the tides of superstition and scepticism that are steadily advancing, we must declare "Jesus Christ evidently set forth crucified for us." We must hold on high the Cross. It is this that will purify our social life where intemperance and vice still seem to have so terrible a grip. It is this that in our political life will destroy caste, will unite class with class, causing men to feel that they are all brethren in the Lord, having one Father of all, one Saviour for all, one Spirit in all. It is this that in our spiritual life will enable us to shake off our sloth, and rise from our miserable selfishness into the atmosphere of self-forgetfulness and love, and make us strong for our Christian warfare.

My brothers, you who are stepping out into life and realizing some of its temptations; to whom sin puts on her most fascinating dress, and passion and inclination cannot help responding. Would you know the true nature of sin; would you see it stripped of all its artificial adornments, and appearing in its true, its hideous character? Go to the Cross of Christ, and see there God's verdict upon it. You could not, I am sure, you dared not, listen to the voice of the Tempter, or roll sin under your tongue as a sweet morsel, if you considered what it cost the Redeemer. You would call for revenge on the sins that nailed Him to the Cross, and crucify the lusts that crucified your Lord. Or would you estimate the alarming power of sin. You may

The Law of Life through Death. so

learn it at the Cross. Had less been sufficient, less would have been sacrificed. It was needful that Christ should suffer these things. Would you learn what power may be yours; a power equal to every emergency; that shall enable you to repel the fiercest attacks of the devil; that shall enkindle within you a holy enthusiasm for what is good and pure and manly, and a righteous shrinking from all that is mean and unlovely. The noblest men and women that have walked our earth have been those that have stood nearest to the Cross of Christ, and laid bare their hearts to all its sacred influences. The symbol of the perished seed-corn is thus true of Christ Himself in reference to His great redeeming work.

But again. This symbol is true of Christ's disciples in reference to the higher life. Not only do these words prefigure the mystery of Christ's atonement for sin, they also declare the one great law of life for His followers; that from self-renunciation and self-sacrifice a harvest of blessings will spring, that the Divine Life can only be enjoyed by the crucifixion of the self in us; for Jesus adds in the next verse, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."

We have here a glimpse of the Divine view of life. What we call life, and what God declares to be the only true, real life, are often very different things.

To enjoy life means, with some, getting all they can out of the present, the world's prizes and pleasures. To see life, with some, is another term for entering more into the world; rushing into scenes where Satan holds high carnival, and plunging recklessly into sin. But to enjoy life means, with God,

❧ The Law of Life through Death.

for a man to bring the faculties of body, mind, and soul into harmony with the Divine will; to crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts, and to be renewed in the Divine image. When we become the members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones, seeking not our own, but Christ's; being all things to all men, if by all means we may win some. Blessedness with Him consists not in receiving, but in giving. Heavenly joys belong to the poor in spirit. Christ Himself came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many.

It was by no chance circumstance that these words were spoken at the introduction of certain Greeks. They, of all the nations of the earth, had placed "the beautiful" as the highest object of attainment, the only true existence; there was no Gospel in their philosophy for the fallen and the abandoned, no pity for the depraved. It shrank from the contaminating touch of misery, deformity, and death; but Christ here proclaims that the true law of life is not "beautiful seeming," but "right doing"; is not simply developing physically and morally a perfect man, but forgetting all about self in life and love for others.

"Not first the beautiful and then the true,
But first the true and then the beautiful."

And the law of this life is declared to be self-sacrifice. In Christ we see God's idea of man. In the sympathy, the spirit that actuated Jesus, we have surely the revelation of the sympathy, the heart of the Eternal Father. And the one great feature of Christ's life, which reached its climax at His death, was the spirit of sacrifice. God is love, and does not love yearn to express itself in sacrifice? Does not even human love rejoice in the blessedness of

The Law of Life through Death. 50

giving up for another. How much more the Divine. And it was just like Him, Whose Name is Love, to give His only-begotten Son. If, then, we desire to rise in the Divine life. If we want to be God-like, let us not seek to escape the eternal law of life. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me."

Yet listen! There is no encouragement, it seems to me, in the words of Jesus or of His Apostles, of sacrifice for its own sake, and without some good as its intended result. There can be no virtue in that. I cannot conceive that God can take pleasure in enforced austerities, in fastings, and privations for their own sake. The Church has tried the scheme of ignoring or crushing the human desires and affections implanted within us—tried, and miserably failed. I must believe that my Heavenly Father has created me to receive with gratitude and wise moderation the gifts He has bestowed. Rejoicing in His gifts, and recognizing in them all the bounteous Giver; that it is not the intention of God that we should be weak brethren, wearing out our lives by self-inflicted penances, but strong, healthy, and happy in this beautiful world that He has crowned with His goodness. Our self-sacrifice must be the spontaneous outcome of love; the love that has an ear ever ready for all distress, that stretches out the hand of sympathy for all; that is ingenious in discovering ways of usefulness; that does not ask, "Will it be convenient for me to render this assistance?" But "In what way can I best do it"; that does not enquire—How much shall I be expected to give, but how much is required; that has learnt the secret of self-forgetfulness in an

as The Law of Life through Death.

ardent love for the souls of others. "Seeking not her own," as the Apostle puts it. It is only from a deep heart of love that this grace can spring. Oh, that we had more of this in our Churches, our Sabbath Schools, our work for Christ! What powers for good we might become! The world can sit unmoved before your eloquence; it can listen coldly to your logic; it can question, and perhaps refute, your doctrines, but it bows subdued before the spirit of self-sacrifice. There is a power here that is invincible that may be yours. In proportion as those for whom you are labouring, see that you are entirely unselfish, are forgetting self in your zeal for the good of others; in that proportion you will have a mysterious but irresistible influence over them. It was this surely that made the early disciples of Jesus so successful in their labours. They counted not their lives dear unto them. They were willing to become all things to all men, if by all means they might win some. Need we wonder that they became so holy, that they did so much, that they died so triumphantly. And have we not here the secret of our own slow growth in grace; the reason why we seem to do so little in the world; living at this poor dying rate; content if we ourselves are delivered from the wrath to come, though the world may spin on blindly in its sin? How is it that every Christian is not shining as a light to all around him; how is it that in the society in which he moves he is not as the salt of the earth, as leaven permeating the character of those with whom he comes in contact? The Christian, for whom Christ endured the shame, the humiliation of the Cross, for whose salvation the Redeemer travailed in soul. The Christian, whose are all these exceeding great and precious promises, whose

The Law of Life through Death. so

possibilities of growth are endless, upon whom the angels wait and minister ; for whom the Spirit intercedes ; who might grow up into the noble and perfect man in Christ. How is it that so often, after ten, or twenty, or thirty years of experience we have still such puny specimens of Christian manhood, such spiritual dwarfs ; creeping along the Christian course, instead of pressing towards the mark ; satisfied if only they themselves at length attain eternal blessedness, instead of spending and being spent for the Master's service ; blessing and being blessed by the souls they have brought to the Redeemer ? It is because the lesson of the Cross is not yet learnt. The surrender of the entire heart ; the death of self. " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone."

And so a man abides alone, clasping no brother's hand whom he is trying to lead into the way of life ; feeling no thrilling sense of awe and humility at being used by God for His glory ; alone, while the world, in all its poverty and wretchedness, is crying out for God ; a dry and barren grain, instead of bursting forth into verdure and beauty and life ; first the blade, and then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear.

And alone the man abides. There is something strangely desolate in this thought to me. Alone in his walk through life ; in a certain sense among that great multitude which serve Him day and night in His Temple ; at that Harvest Home where others are coming laden with their sheaves ; in that Kingdom where jewels sparkle on the brows of the soul-winners, and where they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever. " Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone."

Alabaster Boxes of Kindness.

(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, March 27, 1898.)

MARK XIV. 8.

"She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying."

THE story from which these words are taken is one of the most beautiful in the Gospels. It tells of one of the few bright spots in that dark week of our Lord's passion. The time was apparently the Sabbath before the Crucifixion. The place was Bethany, in the one home where our Lord always found loving hearts and a warm welcome; and the occasion was a visit there of Jesus, which was made a season of feasting and rejoicing. It was celebrated by a supper. And for a while all seemed bright. The solemn words Christ had lately spoken about His approaching sufferings were apparently disregarded. And He did not check the gladness. It was meet that they should be glad, and make merry, for Lazarus, who had been dead, was alive again, and gratitude to Jesus prompted any loving service they could render. And yet, as we look back, there is something almost tragic about those rejoicings, when we remember how well Christ knew all that was approaching! Once, indeed, the shadow of the Cross could not be concealed. "Let her alone," said He, "She is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying."

Alabaster Boxes of Kindness. 50

The whole scene is a touching instance of the perfect self-abnegation of Jesus. He could rejoice and enter into the hopes and fears of those around Him, even when the bitter cup of His own humiliation and sufferings was at His lips. "And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on His head." John tells us it was no other than Mary, the sister of Martha, who did this; while Martha served, full of life and activity, showing in the way most natural to her her gratitude to Jesus, Mary's love and thankfulness devised, as she sat there, an unusual, a splendid, lavish, and self-forgotten sign of her adoration. "Then took Mary an alabaster box (or vase) of precious ointment of spikenard," worth more, we learn incidentally, than 300 pence, which would represent then about £10, and, stealing softly behind Jesus, she broke the seal of the alabaster vase, and poured the precious ointment, first on His head, and then on His feet, and the whole house was filled with the delicious fragrance.

Why did she do it? And why did Jesus commend it so strongly? I should not be far wrong if I were to say that she did it because she could not help it. It was just the spontaneous, uncalculating outcome of her love. It was her mode of expressing her devotion. Some have not the gift of uttering their feelings in language. And if they have, there are times when feeling transcends speech, and they long to express in some other and more personal way the pent up emotions of their hearts. Just as there is a sorrow too deep for tears, so there is a gratitude too powerful for words.

And no being could tell what Jesus had been to

❧ Alabaster Boxes of Kindness.

Mary! She had seen Him amid all the experiences of life, in hours of joy and of sorrow, in public, in private; in the world, and in the home; as the teacher, the mighty worker, the friend. She had listened to His wonderful words, and felt the spell of His influence; and He had awakened in her new thoughts and desires and aspirations—a new life—and her heart's best and purest love had been drawn out towards Him. Nothing was too good for Jesus, nothing too precious to be spent on Him. No thought of the utility of the act, or of its need, for one moment entered her mind. The need was in herself, to utter her heart's love; to express in some large, abounding way the affection and the gratitude she felt. It is of the very essence of grateful love to ignore conventional limits; it cannot help breaking in some way its alabaster box of precious ointment; it scorns to offer unto the Lord that which costs it nothing; and Mary could find nothing too precious to lavish upon her Lord. As an old commentator says, "She was as ingenious to create an occasion of expense in religion as most are to avoid it."

Is there not a test here for ourselves? Do we not know at times something of Mary's devotion; the feeling that nothing is too good for Jesus; that we are under a necessity of expressing in some abounding way the strength of our emotion? We can praise Him, it is true, and we know how sometimes, in our worship song, we are able to tell of our love, rise in our aspirations, and rejoice in the God of our salvation. There have been times, too, when in prayer men have been carried away in holy rapture; times, too, when "we breathe no prayer, we utter no word." And yet, have there not been other times when we feel that this is not enough; when we want

Alabaster Boxes of Kindness. 50

to show our love by our offering, the offering not of praise and thanksgiving merely, but of personal service ; when we want not only to give, but to *give up* for Jesus, and express in some large and abounding way the strength of our attachment? As we remember what Jesus is to us, and has been to us, cannot we understand something of Mary's devotion.

Now observe. Christ understood it at once. Some criticized ; some complained of the waste ; but Jesus recognized at once all it meant, and the grateful love of which it was the expression. Only the beautiful soul can truly appreciate the beautiful deed. And with Jesus it was the motive behind the deed that gave it its significance ; not the gift in itself, but the feeling behind it ; not the service, but the love that prompted it. "Waste," did they call it! To Jesus there could be no waste in love. He sympathized with the longing Mary had to give her devotion expression, and He accepted and commended it. Nothing is more encouraging than the way in which Christ, during His ministry, was ever on the look-out for the right motive, rather than the nature and extent of the gift. To Him the will, the purpose, was everything, be the service great or small. Thus, as He sat by the Temple treasury on that day when the offerings were made, and when Jews from all parts of Palestine and of the world beyond were placing their gifts in the great chests. Many a wealthy rabbi was there. Many whom position or learning had made famous ; rich Jews from Alexandria, with costly gifts ; others from Athens and Corinth not to be outdone ; others from imperial Rome ; and all bringing handsome offerings for the service of the Lord ; while the people looked on in admiration as the money poured in. And then there came, creeping timidly along, almost ashamed of

❧ Alabaster Boxes of Kindness.

being seen in such grand company, a poor widow, who dropped two tiny coins into the great chest, There was little sound as these little coins fell. The Temple treasury was but little the wealthier. The crowd who came and went scarcely noticed her. But there was One sitting there and looking on, with those eyes that looked men through, Who declared that of all the gifts that day hers was the greatest! They had given of their abundance. She had given all. And so in the instance before us. When the alabaster vase was opened, and the ointment poured forth, Christ did not talk about utility, and suggest that such an outlay, though well-meaning, was unwise. He saw the large and loving heart yearning to express itself, and He sympathized with it, and accepted it, declaring, "She hath done what she could. She hath wrought a good work upon Me. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

A memorial. It has been said that Christ never lifted His hand to build a monument but once, and that was when He commended the loving, self-forgetting service of this woman. "This that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

But again. She had done more than she knew. "She is come aforehand," said Jesus, "to anoint My body to the burying." We are not to suppose that Mary meant it in that light. But Christ will sometimes give to our good deeds greater and nobler meanings than we had even imagined! Anointing was employed for several purposes. The wealthy and great used these precious ointments on their own persons; or sometimes presented them as a valuable gift, and as a token of esteem to a friend. They

Alabaster Boxes of Kindness. 50

were also used in the consecration of kings and priests. And they were further used in the burial of the dead. It was the last service of affection one could render a dear friend ; it was the expression of both sorrow and love. Mary may have meant her offering as a royal gift, a service such as was rendered now and then to the greatest princes of the earth. But Jesus, thinking of all that was awaiting Him, and of the Cross now so near, connected it with the last office of love a friend might wish to render. "She is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying." She is showing me now in my life the love and tender devotion some reserve till after death. And how thankful Mary must afterwards have been that she had embraced this opportunity of showing to the living Christ her love ! It was well to do as Nicodemus did, and bring the myrrh and aloes and spices for the dead body of Jesus, but better was the fragrant ointment for the living. What a lesson this is for us all. How eager we are to pay all honour to our dead. We talk of them kindly and lovingly and gratefully. We follow them reverently to the grave. We bring our wreaths and flowers. We erect some memorial. We inscribe upon it the expression of our loss, and of our affection and hope. It is all well and good. Good to do as Joseph of Arimathea did, and Nicodemus, and the holy women who prepared sweet spices.

But it is better to open the alabaster box while your friends are still living, and to let their lives be made sweet and happy by it. It is better for its fragrance to fill all the house while they are living than to fill the sepulchre when they are dead. It is better not to wait till our friends are gone before we make it manifest how much we have thought of them, and loved them. It is better to speak our

✻ Alabaster Boxes of Kindness.

words of affection and kindly approval to the living than to inscribe them on a memorial card, or on a tomb.

Someone has well said (I don't know who, but the words are worth repeating), "The flowers you mean to send for their coffins, send to brighten and sweeten their homes before they leave them. If my friends have alabaster boxes laid away, full of fragrant perfumes of sympathy and affection, which they intend to break over my dead body, I would rather they would bring them out in my weary and troubled hours, and open them, that I may be refreshed and cheered by them while I need them. I would rather have a plain coffin without a flower, a funeral without a eulogy, than a life without the sweetness of love and sympathy. Let us learn to anoint our friends beforehand for their burial." "Don't let us wait," wrote Amiel, the Swiss writer, in his "Journal"; "don't let us wait to be just, or pitiful, or demonstrative towards those we love until they or we are struck down with illness, or threatened with death! Life is short, and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are travelling the dark journey with us. Oh, be swift to love. Make haste to be kind."

Yes, the time is short, and opportunity is fleeting. Seize the floating chance to do good to the man who is by you. It will soon be for ever gone. "I shall pass by this way but once," said another, "let me be kind to someone while I have the chance." Yes, but Mary did it unto Christ, and we have now no present Saviour in this sense, no visible Master and Lord. It was Mary's privilege to render this personal service to Christ. That is true, but it is also true that Christ has left us one way in which we may do the same, and may express the depth and fulness

Alabaster Boxes of Kindness. 50

of our personal love and devotion to Him. He has Himself pointed it out to us. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto Me." Loving service rendered our fellow-men is service rendered Christ. Do you want to do some great thing for Me, says Jesus ; do it for those who are most needing it, and I will accept it as a personal service to Myself. "I was hungry, and ye gave Me meat." Even the cup of cold water given to a little child in the spirit of sympathy is acceptable to Me.

"Prayers of love like raindrops fall,
Tears of pity are cooling dew,
And dear to the heart of our Lord are all
Who suffer like Him in the good they do."

Yes, this is the offering we can all make to Christ, and that is very acceptable to Him. We can "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." We can be "among men as one that serveth." It may be sometimes a difficult demand, an irksome service, a costly offering for us to make. But does not Jesus value most what costs us most?

And this will be our reward. The more we give up for Christ's sake, the more precious He becomes ; the more we forget self, the more we enter into the joy of the Lord ; the more we are willing to lose our life in loving service, the more we really find it ; and then at length there will be for us, too, the everlasting memorial—"Well done, good and faithful servant."

"Thus may we make the loneliest lot
With rays of glory bright,
Thus may we turn a crown of thorns
Into a crown of light."

“Upon the Top of the Pillars was Lily Work.”

(Sermon preached at Highbury Chapel, Bristol, September 12, 1875.)

I KINGS VII. 22.

“Upon the top of the pillars was lily work, so was the work of the pillars finished.”

IT was largely by means of symbolism that God first taught men about Himself. Great truths were thus presented in a way by which they could come home to simple minds. As with a child we teach, not so much by our words, as by our pictures and illustrations, so it was with the childhood of our race. The lessons that God sought to impress were conveyed not only by commandment, but by symbol, poetry, parable. We know how largely this was used in the education of the Israelites. Their tabernacle worship, and their ritual, and the events of their wilderness journey were full of it. There was a meaning in it all. This was the medium through which they were able to look upon the spiritual and eternal.

Those pillars of cloud and fire that went before them were more than guides for their footsteps; they were the perpetual tokens of the Divine Presence and help. The water that welled up from the rock and satisfied the thirsty multitudes meant more, Paul tells us, than God's providence and power—

"Upon the Top of the Pillars," etc. &c.

"that rock was Christ." And especially was this the case with all belonging to the tabernacle. There the people were continually pointed to the Divine truth that lay enshrined behind it; and when the tabernacle had passed away, and Solomon's magnificent temple had taken its place, we still find the same endeavour to teach men by means of symbolism, to represent truth in some pictorial form. That great temple was far more than the mere conception of King Solomon. We find from the Book of Chronicles that the pattern of it all was given to David, his father, from the Lord. "All this," said David, "the Lord made me to understand in writing by His hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern." In other words, it was an endeavour to embody God's thought; the Divine Truth was striving in that way to utter itself, and so help men to understand God better, and to form some clearer conception of the spiritual world.

The chapter from which these words are taken gives us a description of the building of the Temple, and of its magnificence; its glory of silver and gold, and exquisite carving and architecture; and, among other things, it tells us of the two remarkable columns that were set up in the Porch of the Temple. They were pillars of considerable height, although whether they helped at all in the support of the porch is doubted. The probability is that they were placed there not for use, but for ornament and significance. Their names afford a clue to the ideas intended to be represented by them. The one was named "Jachin," or "He will establish"; the other "Boaz," or "In Him is strength." Thus in both of these you have the conception of the strong, the stable, the enduring. And as, securely placed upon their foundations, they stood firm and erect, they must have

“Upon the Top of the Pillars

seemed fit emblems of the strength they declared. But this was not all. They were remarkable for their ornamentation. “On the top of the pillars was lily work.” To the strong must be added the beautiful. “Strength and beauty are in His Sanctuary.” It is in the harmony of the two that we get nearer to the Divine thought. The source of all strength must be sought in Him. That vague consciousness of beauty which haunts us like a dream of something lost, may be traced back to Him. “The soul that rises in us, our day star, hath had elsewhere its setting, and cometh from afar.” Its highest realization will one day be found again in Him. It is, then, to the idea that it seems to me is embodied here that I ask your attention this evening.

(1) Strength and beauty the Divine ideal.

(2) Strength and beauty the harmony we are to try and realize in our own religious life.

It seems somewhat unusual to employ the term beauty in reference to God. We are more in the habit of contemplating the Divine Being under other aspects. We think of His power, His wisdom, His justice, His love. And yet it was not so always. As holy men of old meditated on God and His dealings, it would seem that one vision that rose before them was a vision of extreme beauty. In that prayer of Moses recorded in Psalm 90, as he pondered the eternity of God and His watchful providence, the one wish that its contemplation seemed to awaken in him was, “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.” David’s great desire was that he might “behold the beauty of the Lord.”

Isaiah’s promise to those who did righteously and walked uprightly was, that their “eyes should see the King in His beauty.” The prophet Zechariah, in reviewing the various traits of Divine excellence,

was Lily Work." so

is led to break out at length into the joyous exclamation, "For how great is His goodness, and how great is His beauty!" It is not only the strong, but also the beautiful that should enter into our conception of the Divine ideal. It is in the blending of the two that we get the Divine harmony.

(1) Look at it in nature; the works of God's hand. How strong are the earth's pillars! How beautiful its form and varied hues! The massive rock is clothed with moss and lichen; the everlasting hills He robes in their forests and snows; the valleys are covered over with corn; what is stronger than the mighty waves of the sea! and yet, what more beautiful as they sparkle in the sunshine, or break in myriad spray upon the shore! Even in the more terrible aspects of nature—in the roll of the thunder and the lightning's flash, there are not wanting the elements of beauty. "Who by His strength setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power," is the language of one inspired writer. "He hath made everything beautiful in his time" is the language of another. Strength and beauty, this is the message of the natural world.

(2) Or look at the way in which God's providence exerts itself. Is it not wonderful to see how He has not only provided for our material wants, but, over and above, has added so much that awakes our admiration and delight! "Out of the ground (we read) made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food." Preparing with infinite wisdom and love not only the many objects which satisfy our wants, but the forms which these objects take, their shape, and colour, and gracefulness, and scent; making the eye to see and appreciate the beauty, and then making the world beautiful to the eye. What an illustration

as "Upon the Top of the Pillars

of this we have had this spring, of the beauty God can evoke, beauty of tree and hedgerow and flower; beauty of colour, fragrance, variety; oceans of beauty! telling of the infinite resources there must be in the mind that can create all; and if all that comes forth from God has in it something of this harmony, think what the Divine Creator Himself must be! What are they but the expressions of the strong and the beautiful in Him! What are they but the type in the natural world of that harmony there is in the Divine and Spiritual! "The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen."

"How wonderful Creation is,
Thy work which Thou did'st bless
'Tis but the hiding of Thy power,
Divine Almightyness.

We look up in our littleness
To Thy majestic state;
Our comfort is, Thou art so good,
And that Thou art so great."

(3) But not only in nature and providence has the Divine thought striven to express itself. "God has spoken to us by His Son." Once in the world's history was there the living and perfect embodiment of the thought of God. "The Word was made flesh." A man in whom the Divine harmony should be complete, and who should be the source of all that is grand and beautiful in others. You know how the two were blended in Jesus Christ. What strength of character was there! See Him in the wilderness enduring the fiercest attacks of the devil, and overcoming. See Him calmly putting aside the world's homage when it wanted to crown Him! With what serene majesty does He stand before the bar of Pilate! With what courage does He even dare

was Lily Work." so

to die! Never before had the world had such a revelation of moral and spiritual strength! Hypocrisy, and cant, and injustice, and pride all shrank abashed from His searching eye.

And yet, what matchless beauty of character was there!—admitted even by those, like John S. Mill, who would discrown Him! In His childhood everybody loved Him. It was like the unfolding of a perfect flower. Not only did He grow and wax strong in spirit, "He was filled also with wisdom, and the grace or beautifying power of God was on Him." In His manhood there was the full development of what in youth had been in the germ. How gentle He was in His dealings with children, and with those who had fallen! How sensitive to the impressions conveyed by nature! The lily, the sparrow, the face of the heavens, the sower, they all had their lessons for Him! How full of deep sympathy with distress! How forgetful of Himself! How eager, even when upon the Cross, to care for and comfort others! Never before had there been such a blending of meekness and might, of tenderness and greatness, of gentleness and audacity, of self-abnegation and self-assertion, of holy indignation and sublime patience; of submission that was never weak, of feminine tenderness that was never effeminate! Not only was it the glory of God that men beheld in the face of Jesus Christ, "Their eyes shall see the King in His beauty." He has become "the chiefest among ten thousand, the altogether lovely." And this is to be our standard. This is the harmony we are ourselves to strive after in our own religious life and labours for others. Here, in Jesus, is the true type and example—strength of principle and beauty of character. We are to "go in the strength of the Lord," and "the beauty of the

“Upon the Top of the Pillars

Lord our God is to be upon us.” As regards ourselves, observe :—

(1) There must be strength. The pillars must first be set up firm and steadfast, and upon these the lily work. “’Tis first the true.” The true must come before the beautiful; the beautiful must be rather the outgrowth of the true—of holiness, fidelity to conviction, strength of heart. In other words, there must be first the deep religious principle within the heart. When the young ruler came and knelt at the feet of our Lord, it is said that “Jesus, looking upon him, loved him.” His manner was pleasing, his address courteous, his language respectful, his disposition engaging. There was beauty in that young man’s character, and our Lord regarded it with pleasure. But it was beauty without strength. He lacked the faith that overcometh. It was amiability without depth of religious principle. It was like the seed without depth of earth, that in time of temptation would wither away. The truth is, we need the Divine strength to begin with. To say that a man has everything but piety, is to say a soldier has everything but valour, a citizen everything but patriotism. Doubtless all that makes the character graceful and beautiful is to be sought after and cultivated—all the kindness of disposition and frankness of conduct that prove so attractive. But no combination of attractive qualities can make up for the absence of religious principle. We have foes to fight, and difficulties to overcome, and temptations to resist, and Satan to vanquish. We are exhorted to “be strong”; to “quit us like men”; to “be strong in the Lord”; to “be good soldiers,” and as such to “endure hardness.” And for all this we need the Divine energy to start with, the

was Lily Work." 20

germ of holy living must be first implanted within. Our religion must be more than one of sentiment. It must have force, vigour, life. The rugged and manly virtues as well as the sweetness and light. And how may all this be attained? Only by being on the true foundation—only by building on Christ. "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, that is Jesus Christ." A living trust in Him; the strength of conviction that lays hold of Jesus; strength of purpose that follows Jesus; of heart that can endure for Jesus. In other words, we want, to begin with, a living union with Christ, "the new creation in Christ Jesus." "He that hath the Son hath life." It is here you get the unique character of Christianity. The Christian is not a man in whom character has assumed a nobler form, nor is Christianity, as Matthew Arnold has called it, "Morality touched by emotion." The Christian is a man in whom the Spirit of Christ dwells. When Augustine was asked what men gained by becoming Christians, since they could be truthful, chaste, and honest without, Augustine answered that "the very essence of true Christianity was a living union with Christ, from which union Christians derived a new life." "As many as received Him, to them gave He power"—there it is—"power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name."

(2) But once more. "On the top of the pillars was lily work." Together with the strength there should be beauty. Not only the deep, far reaching root, laying hold of Christ, and drawing its life and nourishment from Him, but also the spreading branches and fragrant flowers. It is not enough to possess the brilliant diamond, or the fine gold, if the brilliancy of the one is hidden by the dust, or the lustre of the other dimmed for

“Upon the Top of the Pillars

want of polish. It is for us to endeavour to unite the holy and the amiable, to let the diamond in its flashing hues be seen in the most tasteful setting, and the gold with its brightest polish. We are to take each Christian grace, and carry it on to that point where it shall present itself to men's eyes as beautiful. We are to test the growth of any grace in us by the fineness that is given to our Christian feeling, by its symmetry and perfectness and beauty. There is the germ of devotion that is to express itself in service for others, in ministries of love. There is the germ again of humility, that is to grow by unselfishness. There is the germ of purity, that is to be strengthened by watchfulness; of the Divine likeness, that is to be increased by the frequency of our communion. We have to make men lovers of goodness, and how can we do it better than by showing them how beautiful a thing it is! Here, in the Word of God, are portraits of the beauty of holiness, but we are to be its living exemplars. Here, in the Gospel, is portrayed that life of matchless love and beauty. Yes, and we are, in a sense, to be Jesus to our fellow-men. What are holiness and self-denial to the world till it see them embodied in a life? All that the night season knows of the sun is from its light reflected from the moon, and the only vision of the beauty of the Lord that many a dark, benighted soul has is the reflection of the Divine image in those who bear His Name.

How earnest this should make us. We are to be revealers. Whatever we ourselves believe, that we are to manifest. Whatever phase of God's character we have grasped, that we are to make known, to let the light that has been kindled at the Divine Source flash out into the dark world. It is said that in every one there is some revelation of God that is

was Lily Work."

his revelation, the truth God had for him "as he was able to bear it." Well, that he is to make known to others. Around us is the great darkness, men sunk in worldliness and unbelief. Brethren, let us speak boldly, faithfully, the truth we know. "Holding forth the Word of life." "Upon the top of the pillars was lily work." God's words are not only to be laid up in the heart. They are to be bound as a sign upon the hand, and to be worn as frontlets, to be where they can be seen, and where they show we are not ashamed of them. We are thus to make manifest to others something of the beauty of holiness.

(3) In conclusion, How are we to seek to realize this Divine harmony God desires to see in us. The answer is, only in Jesus. He is more than pattern,—power. He is more than specimen—source of all. He is more than example—our Redeemer. The Divine strength we are needing—it is all to be realized in Him. First the strong foundations laid in the Divinity, and Incarnation, and life and suffering, and death and resurrection of our Lord. Our strength lies there. In the great fact that all this is accomplished, that the deliverance and the salvation and the justification before God are ours. It is upon that we are to build. And then the strength we continually need, the daily grace, the unction from the Holy One, the power that overcometh, that, too, is all in Him. Would you be strong, spiritually, divinely strong, like Christ, like God? Oh, look to Christ. Abide in Him, and let Him abide in you. It is He alone who can strengthen you with all might. And the beauty, too, must be derived from Him. We know how the companionship of those whose characters are beautiful and noble tends to develop in us the same qualities. We cannot be long

☞ "Upon the Top of the Pillars," etc.

in their society without catching something of their spirit, and reflecting something of their beauty of character.

And with Christ. If we would have His beauty upon us, we must be much in His society. It is when we pass within the veil, and enter the very Holy of Holies, and sit down at the feet of Jesus, and in solemn hush look up into that face, and rest in visions of His love ; when we linger in that Presence with the cry, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," till we feel the Divine life bounding within us, and the Divine love welling up in our hearts—it is then that we behold His beauty ! And as we thus sit at His feet, and gaze at Him, will the Divine glory, as He bends over us, transfigure us, and we be able to exclaim with rapture, "I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." See to it that on the top of the pillars there is lily work.

Acceptable Prayer.

(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, May 24, 1891.)

PSALM LXVI. 18.

"If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me."

WHY is prayer so often unanswered? It is a question not perhaps often asked openly, but often put to ourselves. How is it that we do not more frequently have to say with the Psalmist, "I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears." How is it that the Book of Psalms, which is largely a Book of Prayers, records an experience which seems to be in this respect above what many a Christian is realizing to-day? Why cannot we more often say, "Verily God hath heard me; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer." "Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me."

I wish to speak this morning of some of the hindrances to acceptable prayer. Why we ask in prayer, and, it may be, receive not; why we cannot, so often as we would like, use the Psalmist's words as our words, and say, "God hath heard me; He hath attended to the voice of my prayer."

Let us remember, however (1), Our prayer may be only apparently unanswered. We often do not take into account the element of time. We forget that God has an eternity to work in; that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years; and that it

☞ Acceptable Prayer.

is often part of His gracious discipline to keep us waiting. We forget the lesson taught us by Christ's treatment of the Syro-Phœnician woman. God may tarry in order that our prayer may become more earnest, more importunate, that, like Jacob, we may be brought into that state in which we shall refuse to let Him go except He bless us. This seems to have been the sort of prayer that brought down the greatest blessing the world has ever had—the baptism of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost. It was not granted at once. It was after ten days' waiting, watching, pleading; days, we may be sure, of intense anxiety and soul hunger. Thus our prayer may be only apparently unanswered because the answer tarries.

(2) Again, the answer may come in a way we do not realize at the time as the answer. God may not grant me my request, but He may, instead, make me willing to do without it. I may pray for increased prosperity, for success in business, for the attainment of some better position on which my heart has been set, and God may give me instead a contented mind, to be able to say with Paul, "I have learnt in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." Instead of the prayer of Jabez, "O that Thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast!"—a right and proper prayer in its way—I may be enabled to offer up from the heart the prayer of Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me."

Or the answer may come in the gift of a spirit of submission to His will, and in the grace sufficient to bear the trouble. Paul pleaded long and fervently that his physical malady might be removed; that he might enjoy the priceless blessing of health and vigour for service, free from the burden of

Acceptable Prayer. 50

bodily weakness and suffering. The answer came, not in the removal of the thorn in the flesh, but in the grace sufficient to bear it, and to press on in spite of it. The parent may plead passionately for the life of his dying child, and the answer may come, not in recovery of the child, but in the gift of a spirit of quiet submission to the will of God ; in the realization of a higher life and consecration ; the grace to say, " Not my will, but Thine, be done." When we say, " Thou art a God Who heareth prayer," let us not forget that to hear is not necessarily to grant ; but to hear, with God, is necessarily to attend to, necessarily to care for in the very best way. God had a better thing for Paul than granting his prayer, and removing his infirmity ; He could make him stronger than his infirmity, and more than conqueror over it. God had some better thing, it may be, for you than the preservation of your child's life. He designed, by means of its removal, to lift you, and perhaps others, nearer to Himself, and to make Heaven precious.

Again, the answer may come not quite as we expected, but in the gift of wisdom to devise right methods to secure the end we seek. I may be praying very earnestly and sincerely for a blessing on my Sunday School class, or my own special form of Christian work ; that those I labour among may be brought to love and serve Christ ; and the answer may come in the conviction that the hindrance has been with myself ; that I must adopt new methods, apply myself with more zeal and perseverance to the work. Thus God has many ways of answering our prayers ; better ways, too, sometimes than by granting us the very thing we ask. God can do " exceeding abundantly above that we ask or think."

Let us remember, too, for our encouragement, that

❧ Acceptable Prayer.

there are certain advantages in prayer to the person who prays, whether the prayer is answered or no. You cannot be much in prayer to God without being much the better for it. You cannot cultivate the habit of carrying all your wants and wishes to Him without learning much of His mind and will. It is said that the holiest men are the most prayerful ; it may also be said that the most prayerful men are the holiest. Prayer is one of the means God employs to render our desires more spiritual. We are full of wants, many of them poor, mean, ignoble ; but as we bring them to God, and begin to spread them before Him, we become conscious, often, how very little they are ; how small are the things on which our hearts are so set ; we become conscious that there are greater things than these we should be desiring ; we are taught to covet earnestly the best gifts. Thus the very act of prayer tends to make our desires more pure.

So, too, our praying, if it be sincere, calls into exercise a large number of Christian graces—faith, patience, humility, reverence, importunity, together often with consecration to service ; for prayer for others often leads to work for others, and to self-sacrifice, that we may attain our object. As we rise from our knees we rise with new resolves to do what we ourselves can to bring about what we have been asking ; we rise with enlarged views of our possibilities, with a fuller sense of our dependence upon God.

Then, too, prayer helps us to realize communion with God ; whether we get the actual thing we are asking, or not, how much comfort and relief and joy we do get, by the simple pouring out of the heart's need to God ; telling Him about our trouble, our shame, our temptations ; how we have struggled, it

Acceptable Prayer. 50

may be, and have yet failed ; how we have left undone that which we ought to have done, and done that which we ought not to have done ; how we are feeling weary because of the way ; how we want to be and do better, and yet find it so hard ! Why, you never came away from such an interview without feeling strangely comforted and refreshed ; without knowing something of Jacob's experience that night at Bethel. The very intercourse and communion that prayer leads to is a glimpse and foretaste of Heaven.

Still, admitting all this, that concerning all sincere, earnest supplication, it may be said, in a certain sense, that "praying breath is never spent in vain" ; still, the chief purpose of praying is obtaining, of asking, receiving, and there are, we know, we feel painfully conscious of it, many prayers unanswered that ought to have been answered ; many blessings sought and not received that should have been received ; times when God has not attended to the voice of our prayer ; when the conditions of acceptable prayer have somehow not been fulfilled by us ; and some hindrance has interposed. "We have not because we ask amiss." What then are some of these hindrances ? Why does God refuse to answer our prayer, though it may be for something He is willing to bestow ?

I answer (1), One hindrance is the want of faith. We venture on God's promises as timid people venture on the ice, saying at every step, "Now it is going to give way." We don't believe that God is as good to us as He says He is ; that He does love us as He says He does. We don't expect great things. We should be surprised sometimes if the answer came ! We should not be prepared to receive it ! I am not sure that the answer to some of our best requests

☞ Acceptable Prayer.

would not somewhat disconcert us. And yet there is nothing that we, as parents ourselves, look for more than the confidence of our children; that they should believe in us, in our love for them; in our anxiety to help them; our readiness to give them of our very best. There is nothing that grieves a fond parent more than any evidence of distrust on the part of his children. And God is our Father, and He expects us to trust Him and to believe that "He is rich unto all that call upon Him." It is what our Lord was continually insisting upon as the great condition of His blessing. "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed"; "According to your faith be it unto you"; "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" The hindrance is often want of faith.

But another hindrance, and the one specially referred to in our text, is (2) Want of the right disposition. "If I regard iniquity in my heart." It is not enough to desire good things, to pray earnestly for them, and even to expect them; there must be the putting away from ourselves of that which is displeasing to God. I believe that this, more than anything else, is the great hindrance in the way of answer to prayer, something within ourselves that prevents it. You will remember how much stress Christ laid upon this connection between a right disposition and success in prayer. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will."

So, too in the Old Testament. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Do we want our prayers to be answered? Are we praying for ourselves, our home, our work, our Church, our friends, and wondering why our prayers are not answered? Are we

Acceptable Prayer. 50

seeking strength and wisdom for some service, and wondering why it does not come? Are we wanting to be used by God for His glory, but are conscious that He has not yet answered our request? Then let us look within and examine ourselves; or, better still, ask God to "search us, and try us, and see what wicked way there is in us." It is there that too often we find the real hindrance. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

And what is iniquity? It is a very striking and significant word. It means that which is twisted or bent out of the straight line of right. It is the same metaphor as that which we have in our other word, "wrong," which means that which is wrung or warped from the straight line of right. And to regard iniquity in the heart is to have wrong thoughts, wrong desires, wrong feelings, wrong attachments; to be secretly, perhaps almost unconsciously, cherishing some thought, desire, or disposition that is opposed to the will of God; *e.g.*:—

(1) To cherish in any way an unforgiving spirit is to regard iniquity in the heart, and is an insuperable hindrance to acceptable prayer. For any one of us to presume to approach the mercy seat of God with hard, unforgiving feelings towards our brother man in our heart is to provoke the enquiry, "Who hath required this at your hands to tread My courts?" "Go, first, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." There is nothing that is more opposed to the character of the All-merciful Father, Who is kind to the unthankful and to the evil, than an unforgiving spirit. If we want God to answer our request, let us pause and ask ourselves how it is with us in this respect? Are we living in charity with all men? Are we forbearing, forgiving? Are we kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving

☞ Acceptable Prayer.

one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us? For, depend upon it, however upright and just we may be in our dealings, however zealous and conscientious we may be in our work, yet if we cherish hard, uncharitable, unforgiving feelings towards any, the Lord will not hear us.

(2) Again, I need hardly say all indulgence in impure thoughts and imaginations is an insuperable hindrance to acceptable prayer. The man who harbours such thoughts when they come, and feeds upon them, who does not resist them, and fling them from him as one would fling away an adder fastening on his hand, cannot hope for an answer to prayer. They are the pure in heart who see God. All indulgence in sensuality, though it be confined to the recesses of the heart, though it be in our thoughts, must grieve the pure and holy God, and prevent His blessing.

(3) Again, an undue attachment to the things of the world, that which commonly goes by the name of "worldliness," is another grave hindrance to success in prayer. Why did our Lord say concerning the evil spirit the disciples could not cast out, "This kind goeth out by nothing except by prayer and fasting"? Why did He link the fasting with the praying? Why should not prayer to God be enough—the earnest cry going up to God be enough? There is surely nothing specially acceptable to God in abstinence for its own sake. Did not the Son of Man come eating and drinking? Yes, but I think the lesson is here:—If you want God to answer your prayer; if you want him to bless you, and make you able to do great things for Him, to cast out evil from yourself or others, you must hold very loosely the things of time and sense; you must not love the world, nor the things of the world. You must accus-

Acceptable Prayer. 50

tom yourself to live as though you were not dependent upon these, but as though your home, your substance were elsewhere. You must set your affections on the things above. It is just coming back again to Christ's own word about prayer, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will." Live away from Christ, and in sympathy with the world, its maxims, its fascinations, its snares, and its subtle influence will creep over you and rob you of all the conditions favourable to acceptable prayer.

"If I regard iniquity." How needful, then, the prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me." If we are not realizing the answer we had hoped; if we are conscious of no Divine response, if our work seems fruitless, and our cry to God to make use of us seems to have been in vain, let us look earnestly within; let us ask whether there is anything in our disposition, habits, thoughts, manner of life that is opposed to the holy will of God; and let us resolve, in His strength, to put it away from us. Surely it is worth any effort, any sacrifice, to be able thus to stand in the presence of the King of kings and ask what we require; to be able thus to touch the golden sceptre, and have our requests granted! Yet this, we are assured by Christ Himself, is God's will concerning us. If there is hindrance, it is, it must be, with ourselves.

The Sepulchre in the Garden.

*(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, Easter Sunday,
April 12, 1903.)*

JOHN XIX. 42.

"Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day, for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

"IN the place where He was crucified there was a garden ; and in the garden a sepulchre " ; and there, when the worst was over, and the Sabbath drew near, loving hands carried the body of Jesus, and placed it in the tomb. It seems to us a strange association—a sepulchre in a garden ; a garden by the Cross ; and that garden belonging to one who was a friend, a disciple of Jesus ! Yet here was the garden of Joseph of Arimathea, the garden that he, a man of wealth, had purchased or laid out for his own pleasure, fragrant, no doubt, with its vines, and fig trees, and flowers ; where he might walk and meditate and enjoy the beauties of the natural world ; and yet, in it, he had hewn out a sepulchre ! There, surrounded by flowers, tokens of life and gladness, was there the empty tomb, waiting year by year for its first occupant. It may be he placed it there, in his own garden, while yet in the full vigour of his life, that his thoughts might often travel onward ; that in the cool of the evening he might walk there and think of the unseen ; that the great change that would one

The Sepulchre in the Garden. &c

day come to him, the wealthy and honoured member of the Sanhedrim, as to all men, might be no unexpected experience. He was a good man, a holy man; and in the place where all around him spoke of life and growth, where there was beauty, sunshine, flowers, he put this token of death, this reminder that, as "a flower of the field so man flourisheth, for the wind passeth over it and it is gone."

We are all of us more or less busy laying out our gardens in life, planting them with flowers, tending them, removing the weeds, trying to make them beautiful and fruitful, walking in them, and seeking happiness from them. The man of business has his garden; the wife and mother in the home has hers; the student has his; the man of social instincts has his; the man of the world his. We are all of us, whether rich or poor, seeking, in some way or other, to get what good we can out of this life; some striving much harder than others; some far more determined to make the best of the present life; but all more or less so. So far, so good, only don't let us, in our plans and anticipations, forget the sepulchre that is there also. We cannot really separate them. There is no garden without its sepulchre. Our garden we picture to be all flowers and sunshine, our sky without a cloud, our voyage without a storm. But we soon find out our mistake, soon discover how very transient these things we have been so prizing are; how soon something may happen that may bury them away while we stand without at their sepulchre weeping. One thing, however, we can do. Though we cannot have a garden without a sepulchre, we can have the sepulchre transfigured and glorified! Joseph of Arimathea had hewn out that sepulchre for himself. There it was waiting for the day when it was to receive his body

of The Sepulchre in the Garden.

as its first occupant. Little did he think what high honour was in store for it, and what joy it was to bring to the world! But so it was; for "there they laid the body of Jesus"; there, by that grave, the holy women came and watched and wept; there the angel descended and rolled away the stone; there the Lord of glory rose from the dead, and Joseph's tomb became the cradle of Christianity! How changed it must ever afterwards have seemed to Joseph! What a glory that sepulchre assumed! What life has come to us from that symbol of death! How the world's hope has centred round that grave! It was a sepulchre in a garden, the sign of death in the midst of life; but the sepulchre has in this instance glorified the garden; the symbol of death has become the assurance of a more wonderful and eternal life!

And it may be so with us, wherever we find the sepulchre in the garden that we have made (as find it we shall some day, in some way, however much it may now be concealed by the flowers). If, whenever we do find it, we find, as we may, that Jesus has been laid there before us, and that from it He has risen to eternal life, how that will transfigure all! Where our hopes seem buried there we may find that a higher life begins; where sorrow seems triumphant there we may discover the well-spring of eternal joy. If there is no garden without its sepulchre, there need be no sepulchre without Christ in it to transfigure it. It is there that men still meet with Christ. "It is good for me," said one of old, "that I have been afflicted." More have found Him in the day of adversity than in the day of prosperity. The brightest and most wonderful revelations of God have been vouchsafed by the open tomb.

The Sepulchre in the Garden. 50

It was surely fitting that the Redeemer's resurrection should take place in a garden. It was, we read, in a garden, that man, made in God's image, was placed to dress it and to keep it. It was in the garden that temptation came, and that man threw off the sovereignty of God. It was in the garden that Jesus, in His great agony, resisted the Tempter, till the ground was moistened with His blood. And now that all is over, and the victory complete; it is from the garden that Jesus rises, leading captivity captive. There the crown of man's innocence was lost. There it was won back by Christ. There death's sentence was first pronounced, and there death itself was conquered.

"There laid they Jesus therefore, because of the Jews' preparation day." The next day was with the Jews a high day, a Sabbath of peculiar splendour and solemnity, because it was at once a Sabbath and a Passover; and at sunset the new Sabbath would begin. In Jerusalem it would be a day of rejoicing. But who can tell what it must have been to the disciples and followers of Jesus! They had seen their Lord, in Whom they had trusted, betrayed and crucified. The darkness that closed upon Calvary had seemed to close upon all their fondest hopes. Jesus their Master had gone to the voiceless and unhearing dead, and those lips that had so often spoken words of comfort were now sealed in the stillness of the grave. While the Roman soldiers, who had expected nothing, went away serious and impressed, the disciples, who had anticipated so much, went home to weep over every expectation disappointed. In loving secrecy a few faithful friends had removed the body from the Cross and laid it in the tomb. And then, drawn together by their common calamity, they could only, through the long dreary hours of that

❧ The Sepulchre in the Garden.

Sabbath, brood over the scenes of the past day, the strange and tragic conclusion to so wonderful a life, and talk of their day-dream of earthly glory now ended. Yet not all of them. Two, at all events, could not keep away from the garden. There, so Matthew tells us, was Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, probably Mary of Bethany, sitting over against the sepulchre. It has been said that it is the glory of woman that she seldom forsakes those whom she loves, even when things are darkest. It is to the eternal honour of the women who ministered to our Lord that they clung to Him when all others had forsaken Him and fled. They were women who stood nearest to the Cross. They were women who followed those who bore Him to the sepulchre and beheld where He was laid. And there these women, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, sat and watched, as though they could not quit the spot. Hour after hour passed, the moon shone down upon their vigil, night came and went, and still they lingered, some think until the next day, the Sabbath closed. They could not forget that marred face, now cold in death, but once so beautiful in life. They never thought of a resurrection. They had seen Jesus die, and any memory of a promise of rising again had apparently died with Him. They had no hope of seeing those eyes beam upon them again. They never expected to hear again that gracious voice. But their love still clung to their Lord. He had apparently failed them; had disappointed them, and been defeated. They had hoped this would have been He Who would have redeemed Israel, and now He was lying in a tomb; but though their faith received a shock, *love* was still triumphant. And so they watched, watched round the grave of their buried hopes, only leaving it for a little season;

The Sepulchre in the Garden. 50

and then, as soon as the Sabbath was over, "as it began to dawn," says one Evangelist; "very early in the morning," says another; "while it was yet dark," says a third, coming again, together with other women, and bringing precious ointments and spices to embalm the body of Jesus; longing to render some of those tender ministries by which we try to express our affection for the dead. It was one of those services of love on which they were bent such as woman's heart knows best how to render, and yet its very character shows how all hope concerning Jesus had fled. They had prepared, probably with much care and trouble, the ointment and spices, with which to embalm Christ's dead body. Any hope, any thought of not finding the body does not seem to have occurred to them. They never imagined that God would restore to them more, far more, than they had lost. Their only difficulty, which they talked over as they went was the stone. "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" There is often some questioning of this kind. But their anxiety was quite needless. When they reached the garden, lo! the massive stone had been already rolled away, and not only rolled away, an angel was sitting on it! The grave was open! There was no longer a guard, for the soldiers had fled in terror, and, entering in, they saw angels in white and shining apparel, one of whom spoke to them in tones of gentle sympathy; bade them not fear, not seek the living among the dead, but to remember His own words about it while He was yet in Galilee, and go quickly and tell the disciples, and especially Peter, that Christ had risen, as He had promised them, from the dead. And "the women," we read, "departed quickly, and fled from the sepulchre with fear and great joy. For they trembled, and were amazed.

❧ The Sepulchre in the Garden.

Neither said they anything." But ran to bring His disciples word. They had thought to embalm the dead. They were to become the heralds of the Resurrection. But Jesus, though He had left the sepulchre, was still in the garden. He had not yet gone forth. He knew that they were coming on that errand of sorrowful ministry, and seems to have waited for them, just as He is always waiting for those who are seeking Him. He knew their love and fidelity, and gave to them the first manifestation of their risen Lord. For, as those women were leaving that garden, Jesus Himself met them with the words, "All hail." It must have been a strange and thrilling moment, too thrilling for any utterance on their part. "And they came and held Him by His feet and worshipped Him"—did Him reverence. And then said Jesus unto them, "Be not afraid."

Next to the intense interest connected with our Lord's last words on the Cross should be our interest surely in His first words spoken after the resurrection. Jesus had come back to them from death, back from the sepulchre, from the other, the spiritual world. He came, having vanquished death, and brought life and immortality to light, and this was the first greeting—"All hail! Be not afraid." And we may still take these words as Christ's Easter greeting to us, as the salutation of the Lord to us this day. All hail, ransomed one, for your redemption is accomplished. He Who died for your sins has risen again for your justification. This is the seal of His mission and Messiahship. He is "declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." And "be not afraid," anxious one, troubled one, watching over some sepulchre in your garden, for He Who has risen ever liveth, and goeth before you on life's journey. He that has begun the

The Sepulchre in the Garden. 50

good work in you is able to carry it on. Be not afraid henceforth of trial or temptation, of man or of devil. He will never leave you, nor forsake you ; and when you come to the sepulchre yourself, He Who has been there before you, will be with you then, and lead you where death shall no more have dominion over you.

This is the first great lesson of Easter morning—one of hope. We are begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. He has come forth from the tomb the Captain of our salvation. He invites us to believe in Him, and assures us that "because He lives, we shall live also."

Nor does it only apply to our thought of death and the hereafter. There is a sense in which, as we turn from every sepulchre where we have buried some treasure, some earthly joy, we may still, like those faithful women, meet our Lord in the garden, and receive His benediction.

And then another passing thought for us as we leave the garden and the sepulchre is this. "As Christ was raised from the dead by the glory," *i.e.*, "the power of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." There was Divine power at work at that sepulchre in the garden. It rolled back the stone. It brought life into the cold, dead clay. It brought forth Jesus as conqueror over death. It raised Him on high, and enabled Him to lead captivity captive. And this is the Divine power which can enable us to walk in newness of life. The glory of the Father was never more manifest than when it wrought in Jesus, enabling Him to rise triumphant over sin and death. And the glory of the Father is manifested still, wherever there is victory over evil, wherever we rise with Christ, and are walking in "newness of life."

✠ The Sepulchre in the Garden.

There is no way in which we can celebrate our Easter so well as this. We may be glad, thankful, full of praise to Him Who is the Resurrection and the Life, Who has brought life and immortality to light. But the best way of all to celebrate Easter is to manifest God's glory by letting this Divine power work in us, so as to walk in newness of life. Let us show that we are risen with Christ by "seeking the things which are above"; by seeking heavenly occupations, heavenly objects, the things of the Spirit; by setting our affections on the things above—God, Christ, Heaven, Eternity. He Who raised up Jesus from the dead, can, and will, if we permit Him, raise us to the life of holiness and joy. "Therefore be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Addresses on the Bible,

AND THE SPIRIT IN WHICH WE SHOULD APPROACH IT.

No. I.

(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, March 29, 1903.)

PSALM CXIX. 18.

“Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law.”

THROUGHOUT this long Psalm, in almost every verse of it, the Psalmist is speaking in terms of praise of the commandments, statutes, precepts, judgments, testimonies of the Lord; by all which words we are to understand the same thing, viz., the revelation of His mind made by God to man. It is also called His Word: “Thy Word is very pure.” Now what was true of God’s Word in the measure communicated to the Psalmist is true of that far larger Word that is communicated to us, and that we call the Bible or the Scriptures. Of course, our word Bible is only the Greek for the word Book, or rather (for it is plural in Greek) the Books or Booklets, and points to the fact that our Bible is really a collection of books—some sixty-six of them—written in three languages (Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek), by about forty or more different persons, and extending over a space of at least 1200 years. The old Hebrew title for what we now call the Old Testament was “The Law,

and the Prophets, and the Hagiographa," or sacred writings. As time went on the three divisions became known as "The Writings," or "The Scriptures." St. Paul speaks of them as the Old Testament or the Old Covenant, thus connecting them with the Giver. In the time of Jerome, in the fourth century, the name given to both Testaments was "The Divine Library." It is unfortunate that we have lost that term, at once so expressive and inclusive. The other name for it, the Word of God, is not so distinctive a name. It is the chief Word of God, but there are many other words. Probably it was this exclusive title, the Word of God, that led to that belief in verbal inspiration, which was at one time prevalent, viz., that every thought, sentence, word, letter, is a veritable dictation of the Holy Spirit.

Well, here it is, a collection of sacred books, which may be compared to a building having many rooms, in each of which there shines a ray of heavenly light. Many Christians are content to gaze on this building from without, as mere tourists would gaze; or they are prevented from entering by the fear of finding within nothing but closed doors. On the other hand, there are those who can take up as their own the Psalmist's words: "Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts: so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works"; "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

It is in this spirit that I should like us to approach the Bible, regarding it not as one Book, but as "The Divine Library, the works of many authors; the products of many ages; the treasury of many Divine records; of things new and old."

It is very interesting to think how the Bible has

The Bible. so

come to us ; how what is called the Canon, the duly accepted and recognized Book of the Old and New Testaments, has grown. The records it contains spread over a period of at least 1200 years, and probably much longer. The selection and collection of our sacred books was not done by any direct command of God, nor by any formal agreement of men. The Book has grown gradually. The parable of the seed-corn growing silently applies here. No one knows exactly how the Bible came to be what it is. Why this Book was adopted, and that rejected. It is sometimes imagined the Church Councils fixed the Canon ; but, in fact, the Councils did little more than ratify the common judgment of Christian people. The Canon of the Old Testament probably began in the reign of King Josiah, and was continued under Nehemiah, when the Law, the first Five Books of the Old Testament, was accepted as God's Revelation ; the Prophets, and the Hagio-grapha, which includes the Psalms, and Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes, and Job, and others, were added later, about 200 B.C. Thus the process was gradual. The Book has come to us like the sun. Men feel the sun's warmth, and see its light, and rejoice in it, without knowing much about the process. So the Scriptures evidence themselves. That we should know in what way the various Books became regarded as a Word, a revelation of God is not needed as regards their value.

So, too, with our knowledge of its authorship. That is partly known, and partly unknown ; but the value of the Scriptures to us does not depend upon our knowing who wrote them. In some cases we have certain knowledge, as in some of Paul's letters. In some we are wholly ignorant, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews ; in some the authorship is disputed,

as in the latter part of the Book of Isaiah ; in some there are traces of composite authorship. So that we may accept it that parts of our Bible are anonymous, and are likely to remain so. But, here again, to know who wrote a book is by no means indispensable. If it were, we should have known it. From the fact that we don't, we may infer that the value of the Scriptures to us cannot depend upon our knowing who the authors were.

So, too, with the date of their composition. To know when a book was written is interesting, and a proper subject for investigation, but it would not alter, to any extent, the value of the revelation. It is when we come to the inner character and quality of the Scriptures that we come to what is of the first importance, and that we discover that the Bible is not like other books ; that it finds us at all the higher levels of our nature. Its precepts rise to the sublimest ideals of moral purity ; its histories, though sometimes of great sinners, are yet full of the purest moral influence ; its teachings are such as human heart had never before conceived. Take, *e.g.*, such sayings as these : " God is love " ; " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself " ; " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God " ; " God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died." Where, in all literature, have you teaching such as that ! It is " the Book of holiness as against sin ; of power as against weakness ; of comfort as against sorrow ; of hope as against despair." No book has had such a religious history ; such a record of moral and spiritual triumph as the Bible has ; of how it has pierced sinful hearts like a sword, and broken hard hearts like a hammer, and consumed the evil of foul hearts like a fire ! How often has a single

The Bible. so

verse been as a spell producing a marvellous transformation! There's hardly a famous passage of the Bible that has not borne fruit in the conversion of some great saint, or in the turn it has given to some great event. At a single precept of the Gospels Anthony went his way and sold all that he had. By a single warning of the Epistles Augustine's heart was melted beneath the fig tree at Milan. A single chapter of Isaiah made a penitent believer of the profligate Earl of Rochester. A word from Paul turned the whole current of the life of Luther. The late Dr. Parker, in his preface to his "People's Bible," says: "The older I grow, the more inspired the Bible seems to become. The Book enlarges like an opening sky. It addresses every aspect and necessity of my nature; it is my own biography. I never knew how great a Book it is until I try to do without it, then the heart aches; then the eyes are put out with the great tears of grief; then the house is no home of mine; then life sinks under an infinite load of weariness."

What, then, is the theme of the Bible? What is the special purpose for which it is, we believe, given? It is God's revelation of Himself to man, and of His purpose concerning man. We may easily look into it for what it does not contain. We may complain that it does not tell us more about Creation, and explain many of life's mysteries. But the Bible does not exist for that purpose. It is not meant to give a complete history of the past; it is not meant to be, as some seem to imagine, a map of the future; it does not teach science or other truths that God has given us the faculties to find out for ourselves. But it does show how God came into touch, so to speak, with man; it does show how God came, full of grace and truth, to save man, and to transform him into

His own image! It is the history not of Creation but of man; not of all men, but of those through whom He was specially revealing Himself to mankind, until, in Christ, He came directly into humanity itself, to save men out of evil, and to awaken in them a new life. It is the history of the recovery of man from the degradation of sin, and of his final redemption. Hence, as long as humanity was growing, the Bible grew; but when it came to its manhood, in Christ; when man attained his highest point in union with God, then it came to a close; though even then it does not close without a prophetic vision of the glory yet to be revealed; of the New Jerusalem descending out of Heaven from God.

Now there is surely something very marvellous in this unity of Scripture; this one great idea running all through it as its theme, written by different writers, at different times, from different standpoints, and yet all dealing with the same great truth—God's relation to man; the history of God's redemption of man.

Will you look at this for a minute. Here is a collection of Books, written by upwards of forty different people, who, generally speaking, never saw one another, and were often unaware that other people were writing parts of the same Book. Some of them lived one thousand and more years apart. Some of them were great and learned; some ignorant and unlearned. Their productions include writings of all descriptions—histories, law books, hymns, poems, prophecies, proverbs, biographies, letters; each wrote from his own standpoint; the prophet differs from the priest, and the Apostle from either. The four Evangelists have their four points of view, and so have the writers of the

The Bible. 50

Epistles. One view of Christ and His Gospel came to James, another to Paul, another to Peter, another to John, and yet all these writings are bound together in a vital oneness by their relation to the revelation of God; they all deal with the same great fact; and their united contributions make up this marvellous Book.

Then, too, we find that although so varied, and at such different ages, there are certain characteristics of the Bible that are true of all the Books; *e.g.* :—

(1) The Bible is always honest in detailing facts with reference to the character of its heroes and its Divine communication. It **d**raws no curtain, makes no excuse, takes life as it is, and describes it without fear or flattery; the defects and follies of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and his sons; the weakness of Moses, David, Solomon; the sins of Peter; the infirmities of Paul, are all described with a firm hand. This is so unlike all other sacred books. It is true to the very root and reality of things. And this applies to all the Bible—its transparent honesty.

(2) The Bible does give an answer to the highest questions and problems that perplex the mind. It does not play with these questions or evade them. It professes to answer them. The questions we ask about God—His Being, His character, His purposes. What the heart of God is like? What He thinks about man, and his character and destiny? What He would have man to do? The whole Book is the answer. It teaches us how to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ as His manifestation; that the Name of God is Love, and that Jesus is the revelation of God's heart.

So, too, with ourselves. Men ask the reason of all the tragedies, agonies, passions; of all the rebellion against God, of all the blight that has fallen

upon man. And the answer that the Bible gives is that it is sin. Sin entered into the world. Sin corrupted and defiled God's fair creation. But it does not only give the explanation. It proclaims the remedy. It does not only say, "You are a sinner"; it goes on to say, "I can save you." It is not afraid to say that sin is the supreme difficulty with God, a difficulty only to be met by a supreme sacrifice, but it also declares that that sacrifice has been offered, the obstacles removed, that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only. So, too, with the future life, and the questions that confront us there! How great the mystery! How thick the veil that hides from us the future world! How are we to meet the Great Hereafter? The Bible speaks with no uncertain sound. Life and immortality are brought to light by the Gospel. In the Father's House there are many mansions; where Christ is, there shall also His servant be, and we can say with our open Bible, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

Well may we say there is but one Book equal to all life's deepest experiences; which touches us at every point; and meets our heart's deepest cravings, respecting the knowledge of God and man, of time and eternity. Well might our poet sing of it in his last hours—

"O Book! life's guide, how shall we part!
And thou so long seized of my heart?
Take this last kiss, and let me weep
True thanks to thee before I sleep."

May the constant prayer of each of us be,
"Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold

The Bible. so

wondrous things out of Thy law. Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts."

Here, then, with the thought of this unity of spirit and theme running through the Bible, I must leave it to-day, with just this one enquiry. Is anything required on our part for the true understanding of the Scripture? Must not spiritual things be spiritually discerned. Is it not "He that hath ears to hear let him hear"? A writer has reminded us that in the world of nature this is true. Huxley, in proclaiming certain scientific facts, says, "Anyone can see the fact for himself with a nettle and a microscope." But why a microscope? Is that not an admission that there are facts that the keenest eyes cannot see without the aid of optical instruments. So, too, the wonderful noonday silence of a tropical forest is, after all, due to the dulness of our hearing; could we hear all we should be stunned as with the roar of a great city. This is just what the Bible claims for spiritual truth. "He that hath ears to hear"; "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." But He hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit. Though the Bible is so plain that of much it may be said that "he who runs may read," yet it is also true that to get at its real meaning much depends upon the spirit in which we approach it. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The darkness may not be in the Bible, but in our own hearts. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and hence the need of the prayer of the Psalmist, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law."

Addresses on the Bible.

No. II.

(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, April 5, 1903.)

PSALM CXIX. 27.

“Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts, so shall I talk of Thy wondrous works.”

I REFERRED last week to some of the names of the Bible, and to the fact that you have between the covers of this Book a collection of sixty-six books from the wisest and holiest of men; men who lived near God, and were taught of Him; men separated from each other by many generations, 1200 years at least having been occupied in the making of the Bible; men, too, of very different talents and acquirements, and yet with one main idea running through their books, one purpose, one great revelation, and forming together one Divine Library, a title we have now lost, but which well expresses its nature. We saw, too, that the great aim and end of the Bible was a religious and moral aim. It is not a book of science or philosophy, but a book which has to do with morals and religion, and that as such its revelation is twofold. It is a Book about God, and it is a Book about man. It reveals God to man, and it reveals man to himself. It does more. It is the history of the recovery of man from the degradation of sin and of his final redemption. It

The Bible. so

does not only say, "You are a sinner." It goes on to say, "But I can save you." It is thus the Word of Life.

Another point to be remembered is its fragmentary character. There is no attempt at completeness. Most of the books of the Bible arose out of passing circumstances, and are in the first instance designed to meet passing wants—a letter to a Church, or to an individual; a song of victory or of thanksgiving; a collection of wise sayings; a history; a code of laws; a prophecy—these form the substance of the Bible. And, yet, that these annals and prophecies and letters should, though so casual apparently in their origin, display such unity in their spiritual teaching, such oneness in their aim, is in itself a miracle, and one of the tokens of its inspiration. Very wonderful is this thought of the Bible as a collection of books by different writers, at different times, designed to meet the wants of the times when written, and yet revealing as a whole the history of God's relation to man, and man's redemption by God.

But again:—There is not only unity in the Scriptures, there is progress. They are the records of a progressive revelation of God, from the first dawn of Divine truth on to the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Men had first to be taught almost as children are taught, who must have training adapted to their state. A child is taught by pictures and other outward signs. The language, too, of poetry, which is made up so largely of imagery and parable, takes the place often of more literal speech. We find this very largely in the history of religious truth. The further we go back in its history, the more we find it taught and apprehended by outward symbols, and by poetry, picture, parable. God had many things to say unto

His children, but they were not able to bear the clearer vision, the revelation had to be progressive.

First came the Patriarchal Age, that which has been sometimes called the childhood of our race. Very precious was the manifestation of God possessed by the Hebrew patriarchs, and yet it is difficult for us to realize how small, how imperfect a knowledge that was! It was an age, perhaps, of trust in an Almighty Being, but without the deep understanding of His attributes and character:—And yet, many a view of the guardian care and providence of the Lord was revealed during that period:—As a God Who watches over the affairs of nations and of individuals; a God Who hates and will punish sin; and Who is ever saying to men as to faithful Abraham, “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect!”

And then, as age succeeded age, newer and deeper views, sometimes more terrible views, of God were imparted, more terrible, not because of the terror of the Lord, but because of the inability of man to receive the higher vision. When Moses besought the Lord that he might behold the glory of the Lord, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,” and was told, “Thou canst not see My face and live,” would it, think you, have been the dread vision of majesty and awe that would have stretched him lifeless on the heights of Horeb, or, as some say (I think it was in George Macdonald I first saw it), that he had died, not of splendour, not of terror, but through excess of astonishment and rapture at the actual sight of the incomprehensible God, the sight of such matchless grace beaming in the face of the Father-God. Too much revelation may hurt by dazzling and blinding. God had many things to say unto Moses, but he could not bear them yet. If he had seen the face instead of the back of

that form that passed the clift of the rock amid the thunders of Sinai, how much could he have understood? The one great aim of God, the end of all our discipline, seems to be this—that man should be able one day to look upon God's face and live.

Then, as time goes on, you have in revelation the idea of kingship becoming prominent, and the Kingdom of God becomes the theme of inspiration ; its majesty, its holiness, its triumphs ; and to the Almighty are ascribed all the attributes of the ideal King, clothed with majesty and girded with strength, Heaven His throne, and the earth His footstool. Then, as time passes, and troubles multiply, new and tenderer aspects of God's character are proclaimed. The song of Moses, *e.g.*, is a grand declaration of the majesty of God ; but sweeter, and tenderer, and touching with true sympathy the heart of man, is the thought of God and the love of God, of which Isaiah tells. Never, surely, had that love been before so exquisitely pourtrayed as when the prophet cried to the weary and sin-burdened Jews, " Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God."

And so with every sign and symbol of old by which men have learnt to think of and draw near to God. Tabernacle rites and ceremonies ; wonders in the wilderness ; Temple services ; prophetic visions. At first mere suggestions of His glorious excellence, faint outlines of the beauty of the Lord, but expanding and developing with every age, still gaining new significance and Divine meaning, until at length all met, and found their glorious climax in the Cross of Christ. All that had been told of God of old, His spotless purity, His awful majesty, His eternal hatred to that which bears the name of sin, and yet His tender compassion, His unfathomable heart of love, all found expression on Mount Cal-

vary, and this was at length the glorious declaration: "God, Who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." God's revelation to man has been a progressive revelation.

So, too, with many a truth regarding our own sphere and destiny. The idea of immortality seems to have dawned but slowly on men's minds. We are all familiar with the fact that, whatever the ancient Jews may have believed or hoped with regard to the immortality of the soul, there was no expression of their belief. There was no outward revelation of the fact by God, nor did the prospect of future rewards and punishments form part of God's system in educating them. It was with temporal mercies the good man was to be blessed. Wealth and prosperity were to be in his home, his horn was to be exalted with honour, and whatsoever he did was to prosper; and since life was short, and the man must soon pass away, the promise assured him that his children should multiply, and his house not die out; while as for the wicked, evil would overtake him, and his posterity be utterly cut off. Still, through it all, slowly, but surely, the idea of immortality seems to have taken possession of men's minds, and they grew to feel it *was* not, it *could* not be, all of life to live, nor all of death to die; felt it intuitively, and were prepared for the glorious attestation to the fact when Christ rose from the dead, and led death captive, and ascended up on high.

Now in the same way that God's revelation to man has been progressive, so has the Bible in its character and teaching been progressive. The full revelation of God is not to be looked for in the Old Testament, for that revelation had not yet come. Neither in

The Bible. 50

doctrine nor in morality can the Old Testament be expected to stand on a level with the New. Christ, on more than one occasion, called attention to the inferiority of its standard, and set up another. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time.—But I say unto you." In reply to their enquiry—Why did Moses tell us to do so and so? He answered, "Because of the hardness of your hearts." They were not fit for the higher teaching. So, too, much of the warlike spirit, many of the expressions used, many of the things then permitted, such as polygamy, and revenge in warfare, are altogether opposed to the spirit of Christ. Those imprecations in the Psalms, so painful to Christian ears now, are to be judged in the light of their own age, not of ours. And some representations of God in the Old Testament must be understood, in view of the incompleteness of revelation at the time. It has been one of the misfortunes of certain periods of the Christian era that men, good men, have drawn their idea concerning God, and their inspiration for their own life and conduct, rather from the Old Testament than from the New, forgetting that there is advance in the Bible, not only in light, but also in spirituality.

At the same time the marvel is that the Old Testament has such a sublime conception of God as it possesses, in such amazing contrast in its righteousness and purity with all the deities that man had conceived! Take a Psalm like the 103rd Psalm, and say how did the Psalmist, whoever he was, David or anybody else, get such a revelation of the heart of God? Why, the Psalms contain visions and realizations of the Divine love and pity that equal those in the Gospels themselves. The Prophets, too, some of them, had glorious visions of the infinite good-

ness and mercy. The Old Testament shows a knowledge of God that is wonderful in a pre-Christian age, and that constitutes one of its claims to be an inspired Book. Who ventures to deny its moral and spiritual transcendency? Who disputes its religious goodness? The standard of righteousness and holiness it lifts up is never a doubtful one. Even in a character like Jacob's the distinction between right and wrong is never left doubtful. "Think not," said Christ, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Christ here Himself bore witness to the Divine worth of the Old Testament. Hitherto the best light for men had been in it. He had come to accomplish its object, to fulfil its intention, to bring the light to perfection. Nor should we forget that they are the Scriptures of the Old Testament that our Lord valued so highly, and that He bade men search. The New Testament did not come into existence till some time after Christ. The Bible of the Jews in our Lord's time was practically our Old Testament.

As George Adam Smith says, in his "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament," "For us its supreme sanction is that which it received from Christ Himself. It was the Bible of His education and the Bible of His ministry. He took for granted its fundamental doctrines about creation, about man, and about righteousness; about God's providence of the world, and His purposes of grace through Israel. He accepted its history as the preparation for Himself, and taught His disciples to find Him in it. He used it to justify His mission, and to illuminate the mysteries of His Cross. He re-enforced the essence of its law, and restored many of its ideals. But, above all, He fed His own

The Bible. 50

soul with its contents, and in the great crises of His life sustained Himself upon it as upon the living and sovereign Word of God. These are the highest external proofs—if, indeed, we can call them external—for the abiding validity of the Old Testament. What was indispensable to the Redeemer must always be indispensable to the redeemed."

Yes, admit all that criticism has to say about the Bible, and admit the human infirmities of the various writers ; admit that there is progress in the morality of the Bible, and that we are not to turn to the times of Moses, or of the Kings, to know how Christ's followers are to live to-day. Admit all this, and more, and the Book still stands unique, supreme, imperishable, the revelation of the mind and heart of God, and of His will for man. And when we go to God and ask His guidance, what He does is to hand us the Bible, and bid us see there the revelation of His will. Let us thank God we have the Bible, and live in a land where it is honoured and taught. Let us prize it very highly, and look to it continually, as Jesus did, for guidance and help. Let us make it the man of our counsels, and do our best to make it known to others, and obeyed by others ; for when all men do this, then will God's Kingdom come, and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Addresses on the Bible.

No. III.

(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, April 19, 1903.)

PSALM XIX. 7-9.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

I HAVE spoken of the purpose of the Bible being to reveal to us spiritual truths, those truths that our own unaided reason could not discover for itself. It is given not to teach us science, or philosophy, or universal history, but to help us to be better men; and when we go to God and ask His guidance, what He does is to hand us the Bible, and bid us see there the revelation of His mind and will. Whereas we talk to God in prayer, God talks to us very largely through the Bible, and for His answer to our prayer we have often to look to the Bible. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

I have endeavoured also to show how one great idea runs through the Bible. It is the history not of Creation, but of humanity, and it deals with the recovery of man from the degradation of sin, and with his final redemption and perfection in Jesus

The Bible. 50

Christ, till man at length attains the highest point of perfectness in union with God. We saw, too, how, though full of one idea, there is yet progressive development all through the Bible revelation; first the blade, then the ear—truth adapted to the childhood, the youth, the manhood of the race; progress in the revelation of God's nature and character; progress in the mode of teaching, first by picture, symbol, parable, and then at length the open vision. God spake to us by His Son. Men saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But with unity and progress in the Bible you have also great variety, and it is of that I wish to speak this morning—the variety of the Bible. It is unity, not uniformity; the difference being that unity works from within, uniformity from without. People are too much disposed to treat the Bible as if it were one book, written in one dialect, fashioned in one mould, intelligible by one rule, instead of being many books, by many minds, belonging to different periods, expressing different phases of life, and habits of thought, and each book having its own revelation, its own contribution to the growth of the Kingdom of God, and together making up the Bible.

Think, first, how varied is its form! Such a variety of literature—song, history, dialogue, letter, vision, proverb, prophecy.

Thus (1) The Bible is a Book of History; the history of sin, of its power, and progress, and evil; how it is regarded by God; of His struggle with it; the suffering and misery it entails, and the means employed to check and overcome it, and at length the history of the victory over it. Or we may regard it as the history of holiness, telling us how it has been lost, how it may be restored, how there shall be the reign of holiness at length.

Or again (2) The Bible is a Book of Doctrine. It teaches us about the nature of sin and holiness ; about God, and His nature, and attributes ; about ourselves and our possibilities ; about the need for atonement, and forgiveness, and the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Again (3) The Bible is a Book of precept. It is full of injunctions to purity, and unselfishness, and love ; of illustrations of the beauty of holiness, and the folly and madness of sin ; of incentives to earnestness, and faithfulness, and diligence. No other book can be compared with the Bible for its morality. Even infidels have confessed that ! Read Christ's Sermon on the Mount, or the Epistles of Paul. Read Ephesians iv., from 20th verse to v., and 4th verse. Read Romans xii. from the 9th verse. What moral grandeur there is there !

(4) The Bible is a Book of promises and threatenings. Marvellous promises of pardon and peace ; of God's favour, and guidance, and protection ; of blessing, and comfort, and strength here, and of eternal life and joy hereafter ; and at the same time solemn warnings that the Almighty hates and will punish sin ; that God is angry with the wicked every day ; that we shall all have to stand before His judgment seat. Thus we may contemplate the Bible under either of these aspects—as a Book of history, of doctrine, of precept, or of promise, and marvel at its adaptation to our varied needs.

Think, too, how varied is its style ! Moses, David, Solomon, Paul, John, all had free use of their natural talents in all they wrote. Each was most thoroughly himself. They were not mere machines. The prophets were as strongly marked in their individuality as are the great preachers of to-day. The Psalmists sang each from his own ex-

The Bible. so

perience. The Evangelists told the story of Christ each from his own standpoint. The various Psalmists saw God in different lights. Various prophets had various points of view regarding God and duty. The entire Old Testament differs in religious point of view from the New ; the coming of Christ into the world made all the difference. And in this way, through this variety, there is different nourishment for different souls. To some the Psalms appeal with special force. There is, indeed, no Book of the Old Testament which seems so to have in it the spirit of the New. It is marvellous when we remember that it was all written long before Christ came. Luther used to call it "A Bible in little," and from it he was always drawing spiritual food. Savonarola, during the month before his execution, lived in abiding communion with the 31st and 51st Psalms, and strengthened his soul by them in view of suffering and death. Another, during his long imprisonment, said that "the Book of Psalms bore him up as a lark perched between an eagle's wings is borne up into the everlasting sunlight, till he saw the world and all its trouble for ever underneath him." Jeremy Taylor had learnt that there could be no affliction great enough to spend so great a stock of comfort as was laid up in the Psalms. Another said, "The Psalms are the manna of the Church. As manna tasted to every man like that he liked best, so do the Psalms minister instruction and satisfaction to every man in every emergency." No less are there single Psalms which have been the special delight of this or that servant of God, so that, loving all, they have yet loved this one with a peculiar affection. Luther, who found so much comfort in the Psalms generally, and who used to delight so to sing the 46th, yet used to say

of the 118th Psalm, "This is my Psalm, which I love."

Others, again, have been specially attracted by the Prophets, and have found, especially in Isaiah, a revelation of the heart of God! Some delight in the Biographies, and owe much to their influence. Some delight in the homely counsels of the Proverbs. I met a gentleman, during a tour in Scotland, who always carried about with him a goodly number of pocket copies of the Book of Proverbs, a book that so charmed him that he was always presenting it to others.

Think again of the great variety there is in the spiritual intensity of different parts of the Bible. Some portions reveal marvellous experiences of the Divine life in the soul! Where will you get such intense utterance of spiritual life and thought as in the 51st and 103rd and 130th Psalms; the 53rd and 55th of Isaiah, the 8th of Romans, and the 1st Epistle of John! How true is the saying of one of the Early Church Fathers that "the Scriptures are like a river, with shallows that a lamb might ford, and yet depths in which an elephant might swim."

Take again the four Gospels as an illustration of the variety, the many-sidedness of the Bible. We have not so much four Gospels, as a four-sided Gospel. The four Evangelists have their four points of observation. The first three are generally alike in point of view, hence they are called the Synoptists; they portray Christ as He lived among men. The fourth Gospel has a character of its own. It is a study of Christ in the mystery and glory of His Person. And yet they each have their own portrait of Christ. Matthew's Gospel was written in the first instance probably for the Christian Jews, and for all who connect God's dealings of old with His

The Bible. 50

people with the coming and work of Christ. "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Prophets" is again and again the concluding clause in Matthew's account of some incident. In Matthew's Gospel we get the longest reports of Jesus Christ's discourses. He was evidently a man of business, noting down what he heard and saw. Mark's Gospel, on the other hand, was evidently written for Gentile Christians, and not Jews. Unlike Matthew, you find scarcely any quotation from the Old Testament. In the first instance it was probably intended for the practical Roman world, for men of action, men who would want to know not so much what Christ had spoken as what He had done; who would be most impressed by His mighty works. Hence it relates but few of our Lord's discourses, and only four parables, but gives us eighteen miracles, and is occupied mainly with the activity and energy of the Lord's ministry. It presents a stirring picture of the conquering might and energy of Christ and His Word. There are many traces of its being painted by one who was there, doubtless by Peter. Then the Evangelist Luke, the physician, presents Christ as the Saviour of all men, Jew and Gentile. It is there we see Jesus as the loving Physician, the gracious Healer of all, as the Good Samaritan, binding up the wounds of every stricken heart. It is there we have the threefold parable of the Lost Sheep, Lost Silver Piece, and Prodigal Son; it is the Gospel of the grace of the Lord Jesus. While in John's Gospel we have Christ's Divine nature set forth. He is there the Word of God; He is the Revelation of the Father's heart. It is just the Gospel to be expected from the disciple who leaned on our Lord's bosom, and it supplies much of Christ's life that without it would have been altogether lack-

ing. Had we only the first three Gospels we could never have known that Jesus went to Jerusalem during His public life, till He went up to be crucified. They tell us only the events which took place in Galilee till the last journey to Jerusalem. It is in John's Gospel that this deficiency is remarkably supplied. John is full of the Judæan ministry, while it is he who has drawn aside the veil of Christ's inner life, and enabled us to see Jesus at home with His own disciples, and to listen to His words of special instruction and comfort for them. Variety, and yet unity, not four Gospels, but a four-sided Gospel; not the Gospel of Matthew or Mark, but "according to," *i.e.*, the Gospel as it presented itself to each. It was a beautiful fancy of the Early Church that in the four rivers of Eden, issuing from a single head, going different ways, and together watering the earth, you have a symbol of the four Gospels, and their source and world-wide influence.

So, too, with the Epistles. Paul sets forth the great doctrine of the Christian Creed. Peter and James are more occupied with the practical side. John soars into the mystery of godliness, and calls on the soul to lose itself in the brightness and glory of God. Paul makes man the starting-point in his teaching, and leads up to Christ, the mighty Redeemer. John starts from the opposite point, the love of God, and out of that he unfolds all. In Paul you have man delivered; in John you have God delivering. In Paul you have man rising; in John, God stooping.

These are but a few illustrations of the variety and many-sidedness of the Bible, and its adaptation for the needs of all. Different classes of men and mind find different nourishment suited to their need; different experiences of life lead us to dis-

The Bible. so

cover new treasures. It is both food and medicine. It brings light, and it gives life. If we have learnt somewhat there is still more to learn. "The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word." If to any the Bible is a dull book, be sure the fault is in ourselves. God provides a banquet, but we, through our own folly, have lost our taste. Let me conclude with a sentence from Ruskin. "All that I have been taught of art ; everything that I have written ; every greatness there has been in any thought of mine ; whatever I have done in my life, has simply been due to the fact that when I was a child my mother daily read with me a part of the Bible, and daily made me learn a part of it by heart." And elsewhere he says : "Let me tell you readers, who care to know, in the fewest possible words, what the Bible is. It is the grandest group of writings existent in the natural world, put into the grandest language of the natural world, in the first strength of the Christian faith ; and the guide ever since of all the arts and acts of that world which have been noble, fortunate, and happy."

Apostles and Prophets of Modern Times.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

*(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, Sunday Evening,
April 5, 1903.)*

JOHN v. 35.

"He was a burning and a shining light."

THIS is the testimony concerning John the Baptist, last of the Prophets before the coming of our Lord. The Prophet of these modern times, he of whom I wish to speak to-night had this, at all events, in common with the teaching of John. Charles Kingsley was a preacher of righteousness; he dared to tell the truth to all classes, rich and poor alike; his call was a call to duty; and his summons was often, like John's, a summons to "Repent, consider your ways, and be wise." There were times when, in his righteous indignation, he was as a burning light, his words like a fire to burn up social abuses and wrongs; while his teaching was as a shining light on the great principles of justice and unselfishness and consecration to God's will. His life was so many-sided that it is difficult to know what to refer to and what to leave out. We may think of him as poet, and of the "Saints' Tragedy," and the saying of one that "God intended Kingsley to be, above all, a poet." We think

Charles Kingsley. 50

of him as the brilliant novel writer, and how he fascinated us with his glowing descriptions in "Hypatia," and "Westward Ho!" and "Two Years Ago," and roused us to new interest in man in "Yeast," and "Alton Locke." We think of him as Cambridge professor, and his splendid lectures on "the Roman and the Teuton"; as country parson, throwing all his energies into a revival of a purer and sweeter village life; or as social reformer, starting his crusade against dirt, degradation, and disease; or as Christian Socialist, proclaiming a real Kingdom of God upon the earth; or as an illustration of that manliness, that muscular Christianity, that believes in the whole man, body, soul, and spirit, being the work of God, and to be devoted to His honour and glory. Asceticism and self-indulgence were alike condemned by Kingsley.

How much we all of us owe to the influence of others! How important that we should try to get into touch with the noblest characters, the best minds. Kingsley was a genius, yet he was immensely indebted in his youth to the teaching of three others. Coleridge, Carlyle, and F. D. Maurice were the three writers who the most influenced Kingsley. Coleridge by his "Aids to Reflection"; Carlyle by his "French Revolution"; and Maurice by his "Kingdom of Christ"; but it was to the last of these, F. Denison Maurice, the Broad Church preacher and writer, that Kingsley owed most. He was young, and at the University when the book, "The Kingdom of Christ," was sent him as a present. It was to him a God-sent message, with a new and higher revelation of Christ's relation to man. "He owed more to it," he said, "than to any other book he had ever read!" It was the beginning of a great change in him, which he thus de-

scribes in a letter to a very dear friend : " This is my birthnight. I have been for the last hour on the seashore, not dreaming, but thinking deeply and strongly, and forming determinations which are to affect my destiny through time and through eternity. Before the sleeping earth and the sleepless sea and stars I have devoted myself to God ; a vow never—if He give me the faith I pray for—to be recalled."

The influence of Maurice's book upon Kingsley led to his acquaintance with the writer, and then to a lifelong friendship. " My dear, my dearest master," he calls him ; while Maurice writes to him, " My dear, dear Kingsley " ; and after the death of the former this is how Kingsley speaks of him : " The most beautiful human soul whom God has ever, in His great mercy, allowed me, most unworthy, to meet with on this earth ! The man who, of all men I have seen, approached nearest to my conception of St. John, the Apostle of love ! "

It was as a country parson, rector of Eversley, in Dorsetshire, that Kingsley was first able to keep his vow to devote himself to God. It was there he came into contact with rural wretchedness and vice ; with the wrongs and sufferings of the poor, and the selfishness and indifference of the rich ; with the problems of the wretched housing of the poor, the miserable want of sanitation, the hardship of the game laws, and the low condition of village morality, and, like a chivalrous knight, he set to work to try to right things. In his own parish, by preaching and by working, he did his utmost to uplift and save men body and soul ; he visited them in their cottages, and had talks with them ; he started adult schools, and cottage readings ; he tried to inspire them with a new belief in their national birthright ; he showed them the possibilities of their ordinary life.

Charles Kingsley. 50

"There was in him," so says one who knew him well, "a simple, delicate, deep respect for the poor; for the good he saw in them, for the still greater good which he hoped to see, and strove that he might see in them; a respect arising out of the consciousness of his own responsibility in having to think for those who could not well think for themselves; a respect because the poor have a greater, not a less, claim upon our politeness of manner and thoughtful courtesy of speech, and consideration in action of every kind." But he did more than set to work in his own parish. His eyes were open to the great labour problem everywhere, and in his novel, "Yeast," he declares fearlessly what, with the English labouring man, were in those days the conditions of rural life. "Day labourer born, day labourer live, from hand to mouth, scraping and grinding to get, not meat and beer even, but bread and potatoes; and then, at the end of it all, for a worthy reward, half a crown a week of parish pay, or the workhouse. That's a lively hopeful prospect for a Christian man." In "Yeast" Kingsley tries to show the feelings that are working in men's minds with regard to these rural problems. He has no immediate panacea to propose. The change must come gradually. He apparently looks to education, sanitary reform, and the raising of the status of the peasant as all steps in the right direction. Had he been living later on, how he would have rejoiced in the Parish Councils Act and all legislation that trains any man to take his due part in the nation's work, and realize his responsibility as a citizen for the well-being of his own city, or town, or village. In "Yeast," however, Kingsley does little more than show the reality of the problem.

"I have given my readers 'Yeast,'" he says. "If

they be what I take them for they will be able to bake with it themselves." And so they have; and there is no doubt that among the forces that have been working powerfully for righteousness and for the amelioration of the working man's lot in town and country has been the publication of Kingsley's novel, "Yeast."

The next light in which we may regard Kingsley is as the Christian Socialist. It was the time of the Chartist agitation, and Kingsley's spirit was profoundly stirred; he felt that many of the claims made were well founded, and that the wrongs were real enough and grievous enough to call for his sincere sympathy. He joined with Maurice and others in what they called the Christian Socialist Movement, and they issued a set of tracts, after the style of the Oxford "Tracts for the Times," and they called them "Politics for the People." Of these perhaps the most famous were Kingsley's "Three Letters to Chartists," by 'Parson Lot,' in which he maintains that his only quarrel with the Charter was that it did not go far enough; it sought a social and political revolution; he desired to see a moral and religious one. "I want to see you free; but I do not see how what you ask for will give you what you want. If anyone will tell me of a country where a charter made the rogues honest, and the idle industrious, I shall alter my opinion of the Charter, but not till then." But it must not be thought that he does not see the other side. Listen to this word to the wealthy. "The Bible says, 'He that will not work, neither shall he eat.' And as the Bible speaks to rich as well as poor, so is that speech meant for the idle rich as well as for the idle poor. Again, is not the doctrine of the whole Bible that even in that last most awful judgment 'Every man

Charles Kingsley. 50

shall be judged according to his works'? And are there not written in the Bible these awful words, 'Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you'? I adjure you working men to trust the Bible, to read it honestly for yourselves, and see if it be not the true Radical Reformer's Guide." It was, however, in his great novel, "Alton Locke," that Kingsley delivered his message to the age on the hard lot of many of the toilers in our cities, and the terrible evils of the sweating system. It has been described as "at once Kingsley's greatest poem and his grandest sermon." Though written so many years ago, it is, I am afraid, no unfaithful picture of the labouring world to-day, and of a good deal of grinding and oppression that goes on in London and other great cities.

Alton Locke, the young tailor poet, had begun to write verses, and had chosen "The South Sea Islands" as the subject. But his friend, a thoughtful, wise old Scotchman, throws cold water on it, takes him to the slums of London, and enjoins him to write his poetry about them. "Those narrow, brawling torrents of filth and poverty and sin—the houses, with their teeming load of life, were piled up into the dingy, choking night. A ghastly, deafening, sickening sight it was; and, stopping suddenly before the entrance of a miserable alley, 'Look!' says Sandy Mackaye, with his Scotch grim humour, 'Look! there's not a soul down that yard but's either beggar, drunkard, thief, or worse! Write about that! Say how ye saw the mouth of hell and the two pillars thereof at the entry (the pawnbroker's shop o' one side and the gin palace at the other—two monstrous deevils, eating up men, women, and bairns, body and soul!) Look at that Irish woman, pouring the gin down the babbie's throat! Look at that raff

of a boy goin' out o' the pawnshop, where he has just been pledging the handkerchief he stole the morning, into the gin shop, to buy beer poisoned with sawt and a' damnable, maddening, thirst-breeding drugs! Look at that girl that went in wi' a shawl to her back, and cam' out wi'out ane! You a poet! True poetry, like true charity, my laddie, begins at hame. If ye'll be a poet at a', ye maun be a Cockney poet, and while the Cockneys be what they be, ye maun write, like Jeremiah of old, of lamentation and mournin' and wae for the sins of your people. Gin ye want to learn the spirit of a people's poet, down wi' your Bible, and read thae auld Hebrew prophets; and gin ye'd learn the matter, just gang after your nose, and keep your eyes open, and ye'll no miss it."

The story is an appalling description of the want, misery, and sin that drove men into Chartism, or any other *ism* or combination that might deliver them from what was often hell on earth. And yet the hero ere long discovers the weak point in all these combinations. "Fool that I am! It was from within, rather than from without, that I needed reform. For my part, I seem to have learnt that the only thing to regenerate the world is not more of any system, good or bad, but simply more of the Spirit of God."

Or take this reference to the Great Healer, Who alone can renovate human society. "When was there ever real union, co-operation, philanthropy, brotherhood among men save in loyalty to Him, to Jesus Who died upon the Cross. I see it. I see it all now. Oh, my God, my God, what infidels we have been!"

One of the reasons Kingsley had in writing "Alton Locke" was, he says, this—his belief that a man might be as a tailor or a costermonger every inch

Charles Kingsley. 50

of him a saint, a scholar, and a gentleman. And, again, it was written, he says, to teach the toilers to become Christians, by teaching them gradually that true Socialism, true liberty, brotherhood, and true equality is only to be found in loyalty and obedience to Christ.

About the same time as the publication of "Alton Locke," Kingsley wrote the tract, "Cheap Clothes and Nasty," an indictment of the competitive system, and a plea for co-operation, or of some system in which co-operation should take the place of competition.

For this the early Christian Socialists, with Maurice and Kingsley at their head, worked with heart and soul. The fruit of their labours was seen in the three principles which form part, I believe, still of the Constitution of the General Co-operative Union.

(1) That human society is a body consisting of many members, not a collection of warring atoms.

(2) That true workmen must be fellow-workers, and not rivals.

(3) That a principle of justice, not of selfishness, must govern exchange.

Kingsley lived to confess, with regret, that many of his hopes with regard to association as the best form of industrial development were still unrealized, though his convictions were unaltered. "I shall die in hope, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off, and confessing myself a stranger and a pilgrim in a world of *laissez-faire*. For this is my belief, that not self-interest, but self-sacrifice, is the only law upon which human society can be grounded, with any hope of prosperity and permanence."

I have no time to speak of Kingsley's poems. The

❧ Charles Kingsley.

greatest of them, "The Saints' Tragedy," is, like his novels, a plea for the self-devoted service of others, while it is a stirring protest against asceticism and priestcraft. He makes his heroine, Elizabeth of Hungary, express, with regard to the social problems of her day, the convictions that animated him in dealing with the problems of his own.

"Be earnest, earnest, earnest; mad if thou wilt.
Do what thou dost as if the stake were Heaven,
And that thy last deed ere the Judgment Day.
When all's done, nothing's done. There's rest above—
Below, let work be death, if work be love."

And now, as to this modern prophet's message to his age. (1) The Christianity he proclaimed was one that belongs to everyday life. He believed that Jesus had come into the world to make men more fit to discharge their duties in the common routine of life; that the divinest virtues are developed, not in retirement or solitude, but by conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, in the activities of ordinary life. The noblest characters in his novels, in "Hypatia," "Two Years Ago," "Westward Ho!" and "Alton Locke," are they who are tempted and strive and conquer.

Listen to this. "Men eat and drink, and do all manner of things, with all their might and main; but how many of them do they do to the glory of God? No; this is the fault, the special curse of our day, that religion does not mean any longer as it used, the service of God, the being like God, and showing forth God's glory. No; religion means nowadays the art of getting to Heaven when we die, and saving our own miserable souls from hell, and getting God's wages without doing God's work, as if that were godliness; as if that were anything but

Charles Kingsley. 50

selfishness ; as if selfishness were any the better for being everlasting selfishness ! If selfishness is evil, the sooner we get rid of it the better, instead of mixing it up as we do with our thoughts of Heaven, and making our own enjoyment and our own safety the vile root of our hopes for all eternity. And therefore it is that people have forgotten what God's glory is. They seem to think that God's highest glory is saving them from hell fire, and they talk not of God, and the wondrous majesty of God, but only of the wonder of God's having saved them, looking at themselves all the time, and not at God. We must get rid of this sort of religion at all risks, in order to get rid of all sorts of irreligion, for one is the father of the other." It is a strong indictment against the age when written. I do not think that in the present day that charge could be brought against Christian teaching, and there is little doubt that Charles Kingsley, and others of his school, with their intensely practical religion, with their manly, everyday Christianity, have done much to bring about the change.

In his conflict with class interests, and oppression, and injustice, and prejudice, he had often to stand fast and stand alone, and endure the onslaught of society ; but to Kingsley, if a thing were wrong, no fear of man could dissuade him from endeavouring to set it right ; while in all, in his modest manliness, his thoroughness, his genuine tenderness, and heartfelt sympathy he fulfilled the ideal of "a most true and perfect knight." The motto of his teaching was this, "Watch ye. Quit you like men, and be strong. Stand fast in the faith."

(2) Kingsley reminds us, alike by his writings and by his life, that the age of chivalry is not yet past. "Some say," he said, "that the age of chivalry is

past! that the spirit of romance is dead! The age of chivalry is never past so long as there is a wrong left unredressed on earth, or a man or woman left to say—I will redress that wrong, or spend my life in the attempt. The age of chivalry is never past so long as we have faith enough to say, ‘God will help me to redress that wrong, or if not me, He will help those that come after me, for His eternal will is to overcome evil with good.’”

I have spoken of him chiefly as the reformer and preacher of righteousness. This is the sort of chivalry he has sought to portray in his writings, and that he strove nobly to embody in his own life. Let me close with a message from him to the weary and heavy-laden, where he invites others to the one resting-place where he had found peace.

Oh, sad hearts and suffering; anxious and weary ones! Look to the Cross. There hung your King, the King of sorrowing souls, and more, the King of sorrows. Aye, pain and grief, tyranny and desertion, death and hell, He has faced them one and all, and tried their strength, and taught them His, and conquered them right royally. And since He hung upon that torturing Cross sorrow is Divine, Godlike as joy itself. All that man’s fallen nature dreads and despises God honoured on the Cross, and took unto Himself, and blest and consecrated for ever. All things are blessed now but sin, for all things excepting sin are redeemed by the life and death of the Son of God. Blessed are wisdom and courage, joy and health and beauty, love and marriage, childhood and manhood, fruit and flowers, for Christ redeemed them by His life. And blessed, too, are tears and shame, blessed are weakness and ugliness; blessed are agony and sickness; blessed the sad remembrance of our sins, and a broken heart,

Charles Kingsley. 50

and a repentant spirit. Blessed is death and the unknown realms where souls await the Resurrection day, for Christ redeemed them by His death. Blessed are all things, weak as well as strong. Blessed are all days, dark as well as light, for all are His, and He is ours ; and all are ours, and we are His for ever.

Apostles and Prophets of Modern Times.

JOHN RUSKIN.

(Sermon preached at Warwick Road Church, April 19, 1903.)

PHILIPPIANS IV. 8.

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

MUCH of Ruskin's teaching might be described as a powerful sermon on this text. Whatever else Ruskin was, as artist, poet, social reformer, he was essentially a preacher and prophet, and it will be eventually not as the poet of the beautiful, but as the missionary of the truth that he will have the most enduring influence. It is perhaps difficult for the young of the present day to appreciate how very much some of us who are older owe to the teaching of Ruskin. When I was a young man, Ruskin was at the zenith of his power, and was giving us continually new and nobler thoughts about art, and nature, and the science of living. So many of his ideas, then fresh and forcible, have now become commonplace; so many of the things for which he then pleaded have been adopted, that it is impossible for those reading his works now for the first time to feel quite the sort of inspiration we then felt. The

old order has changed, and Ruskin did much to bring about that change. The things he pleaded for as a social reformer, such as the organization of labour, a system of national education, the provision of decent houses for the working classes, the need for old age pensions, these and others have long been accepted by all parties of the State as desirable reforms, and have in some cases been carried out. His interpretations of the principles of political economy have largely affected, and to some extent displaced, those of the older Manchester School. While our art galleries, our art schools, our museums, and working men's clubs are a splendid testimony to the influence of his teaching. The first book of Ruskin's that I read was his "Sesame and Lilies," just after it was published, and it awoke in me at once a deep desire to know more of such a teacher. It gave me not only new thoughts as to how and what to read, but also new ideas as to the meaning of life in earnest, and of the need of reality, sincerity, and a lofty purpose in all we do. Who can forget his appeal to his hearers to choose the very best and noblest society in life, the society of the learned, of great minds, of the noblest and most inspired of earth's spirits, by which he meant the companionship of really great and memorable books. While men and women are squeezing themselves into so-called best society, and coveting the momentary chance of seeing and speaking to some celebrated man; while many are spending their years, and passions, and powers in pursuit of trifles "there is meantime a society continually open to us of people who will talk to us as long as we like, whatever our rank or occupation; talk to us in the best words they can choose, and with thanks if we listen to them. And this society, because it is so numerous

and so gentle, and can be kept waiting round us all day long, not to grant audience, but to gain it; kings and statesmen lingering patiently in those plainly furnished and narrow ante-rooms, our book-case shelves; we make no account of that company, perhaps never listen to a word they would say, all day long." And he goes on to show that the first use of education is to enable us to consult in this way with the greatest and wisest men on all points of earnest difficulty. There is a sentence as to novel reading, which nowadays is well worth repeating. Will you listen to it? "With respect to that sore temptation of novel reading, it is not the badness of a novel that we should dread, but its over-wrought interest. The best romance becomes dangerous if, by its excitement, it renders the ordinary course of life uninteresting, and increases the morbid thirst for useless acquaintance with scenes in which we shall never be called upon to act."

It was as an art critic that Ruskin first attracted attention. His object in first writing was to vindicate the great painter, Turner, from the shallow and false criticisms of that day. He did for Turner what Carlyle did for Oliver Cromwell. He tore away the wrappings of prejudice, and showed the true genius of the man, and the grandeur of the ideal he represented. And in doing this, Ruskin did more. He set up a new standard of taste in art. He made the moral sense the criterion of art, the fountain of pure taste. "The picture," he says, "which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and a better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed."

Thus the art-critic grows into the art-prophet. Ruskin's aim was "to attach," he says, "to the artist

John Ruskin. 50

the responsibility of the preacher." He endeavoured to show that all shams are wrong, æsthetically as well as ethically; that real beauty cannot continue without being based upon truth; he taught men to combine simplicity with elegance, utility with beauty; he showed that in the greatest works of art nothing is redundant or superfluous; he showed the relation of art to religion, to morals, to use. In his Inaugural Lecture on Art before the University of Oxford he declared that "the first necessity for the doing of any great work in ideal art is the looking upon all foulness with horror, as a contemptible though dreadful enemy."

It has been truly said that "Ruskin has altered the pictures we buy, the Churches we build, and the houses we live in." He has certainly led us to look for truthfulness and reality as one of the first canons of art, and to despise all counterfeits.

But Ruskin was more than an art critic. He has opened our eyes to new beauty in the world around us, and has inspired his generation with an altogether new sense of the sacredness of nature; to how many have the volumes of his work on "Modern Painters" opened their eyes to see and their hearts to feel that "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Sky and cloud, mountain and valley, stream and sea, tree and plant, flower and pebble—he has taught us to look at them all, to consider them, and admire their beauty of form and colour, and learn their meaning; and he never ceased to lift up his voice against the nineteenth century theory, that man lives by bread alone, and that every other consideration must give way before money-making. "That country is the richest," says Ruskin, "which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy beings."

Those lines of Wordsworth, "We live by admira-

tion, hope, and love," express Ruskin's conception of what true living means, and he has shown us what marvellous sources of pure joy there are in nature and art and the world of books, and in simplicity of life.

Let us look through one or two of the windows he has thus opened. This is how he speaks of flowers. "Flowers seem intended for the solace of ordinary humanity. Children love them; quiet, contented, ordinary people love them as they grow; luxurious and disorderly people rejoice in them gathered; they are the cottagers' treasure, and in a crowded town they mark, as with a little broken fragment of rainbow, the windows of the workers in whose hearts rests the covenant of peace."

This is how he speaks of the grass of the field, and will you notice the wonderful mastery of language! "Gather a single blade of grass, and examine for a minute, quietly, its narrow shaped strip of fluted green. Nothing, as it seems, there of notable goodness or beauty! A very little strength, and a very little tallness, and a few delicate long lines meeting in a point, and a little pale and hollow stalk, feeble and flaccid, leading down to the dull brown fibres of roots. And yet, think of it well, and judge whether, of all the gorgeous flowers that beam in summer air, and of all strong and goodly trees, pleasant to the eyes, or good for food; stately palm and pine, strong ash and oak, scented citron, burdened vine, there be any by man so deeply loved, by God so highly graced, as that narrow point of feeble green. And well does it fulfil its mission. Consider what we owe merely to the meadow grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorious enamel, by the companies of those soft and countless and peaceful spears. The fields! Follow forth

but for a little time the thoughts of all we ought to recognize in these words. All spring and summer is in them ; the walks by silent, scented paths ; the rests in noonday heat ; the joy of herds and flocks ; the power of all shepherd life and meditation ; the life of sunlight upon the world falling in emerald streaks, and falling in soft blue shadows, where else it would have struck upon the dark mould, or scorching dust ; pastures beside the pacing brooks ; soft banks and knolls of lovely hills ; thymy slopes of down, overlooked by the blue line of lifted sea ; crisp lawns, all dim with early dew, and smooth in the evening warmth of barred sunshine, dinted by happy feet, and softening in their fall the sound of loving voices—all these are summed up in the simple words, the grass of the field."

Or hear what he has to say about the clouds ! " It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man, more for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him than in any other of her works ; and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. There is not a moment of our lives when nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, and it is quite certain it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure. And every man, wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The sky is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for the soothing it, and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful ; never the same

for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost Divine in its infinity."

The teacher who can thus unveil Divine meanings in Creation, and help us to find new joys and inspiration in the cloud forms, ever above us, but that we so often never so much as trouble to lift our heads to notice, is one of nature's true prophets. We need not wonder that Ruskin awoke in many a new love and veneration for nature, and gave a new impulse to the faculty of observation. "To any person," he says, "who has all his senses about him, a quiet walk over no more than ten or twelve miles of road a day is the most amusing of all travelling; and all travelling becomes dull in exact proportion to its rapidity. Going by railroad I do not consider as travelling at all; it is merely being sent to a place, and very little different from becoming a parcel." I am afraid he would say the same nowadays of some of our road-scorching!

Contending, however, with Ruskin's love of landscape beauty was another passion—his love of man—and it was this that led largely to his appearance as the political economist and social reformer; to his uncompromising attacks on the selfishness of much of commercial enterprise, and to his sympathy with Christian Socialism and Communism, by which he means the explicit, honest, and thorough-going adoption of Christ's rule of "doing to your neighbour as you would your neighbour should do to you." In "The Crown of Wild Olive" he shows that the true end of work consists in making wealth, not in earning profits, and he defines wealth as that which is essentially valuable in the sustaining of life. He draws a vital distinction between the nature of a want and the nature of a need. "Men want adulter-

John Ruskin. 20

ated gin, but they need pure air, healthy toil, and daily exercise. Women want fine clothes, torn from the plumage of birds ; but they need warm clothing and becoming ornament. Children want tarts and candies, but they need wholesome oatmeal and new milk." He complained that the old system of political economy does not measure a nation's prosperity by its manhood, but by its riches. Steady markets, large profits, orders in advance, high rate of wages—these are the measures of national prosperity. No, says Ruskin, you may have all this, and yet be poor, "your riches may be corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten, your gold and your silver may be rusted, and their rust be a testimony against you." Deeper than material wealth lies the question of moral sources.

His teaching on these questions was admirably summed up in the Address presented him in 1885, on his recovery from severe illness. "He taught," it stated, "that political economy can furnish sound laws of national life and work only when it respects the dignity and moral destiny of man. That the wise use of wealth in developing a complete human life is of incomparably greater moment, both to men and nations, than its production or accumulation, and can alone give these any vital significance. That honourable performance of duty is more truly just than rigid enforcement of right ; and that not in competition but in helpfulness, not in self-assertion but in reverence, is to be found the power of life."

Ruskin was essentially a religious man. He was nurtured as a child upon the Bible. His mother, one of the old Puritan school, obliged him, by steady daily toil, to learn long chapters of the Bible by heart, and to that discipline, he said, patient, accu-

rate, and resolute, I owe not only much of my general power of taking pains, but the best part of my taste in literature. Occasionally, when a child, he imitated the preacher whom he had heard on the Sunday, and delivered a sermon at home. His first discourse was eleven words long, and began with, "People, be good." His mother's ambition was that he should become a clergyman, and perhaps one day a bishop. But God had some better things in store for him than the lawn sleeves and mitre. A preacher he was to be, and during all his days—a preacher of righteousness to his own and succeeding generations, a prophet to declaim against all that was untrue, insincere, unjust, unlovely; an apostle to bring many a neglected side of Christianity home to men's consciences and hearts. Some have complained that Ruskin used strong language in his reproofs. It is true that Ruskin did not mince his words, nor did Carlyle, or Isaiah, or John the Baptist, nor did our Lord Himself.

Sometimes Ruskin's satire is very keen. Listen to the following indictment of our social life; too true, I fear, of much of it. He is speaking of the working classes and the many who give way to intemperance. "Meantime the Bishop, and the Rector, and the Rector's lady, and the dear old Quaker Spinster who lives in Sweetbriar Cottage are so shocked that you drink so much, and that you are such horrid wretches that nothing can be done for you! And you mustn't have your wages raised, because you will spend them in nothing but drink. And to-morrow they are all going to dine at Drayton Park, with the brewer, who is your member of Parliament, and is building a public-house at the railway station, and another in the High Street, and another at the corner of Phillpot Lane, and another

John Ruskin.

by the stables at the back of Tunstall Terrace, outside the town, where he has just bricked over the Dovesbourne, and filled Buttercup Meadow with broken bottles; and by every measure, and on every principle of calculation, the growth of your prosperity is established."

Or listen to the comment on the pious reflection that "everybody ought to remain content in the position in which Providence has placed him." "Ah, my friends, that's the gist of the whole question. Did Providence put them in that position, or did you? You knock a man into a ditch, and then you tell him to remain content in the position in which Providence has placed him. That's modern Christianity. You say—We did not knock him into the ditch. How do you know what you have done or are doing? That's just what we have all got to know, and what we shall never know, until the question with us every morning is not how to do the gainful thing, but how to do the just thing."

When, again, has preacher more eloquently denounced those who have it principally for their object in life to make money, or asserted more earnestly that with all true men the work itself must be the first consideration, and the fee, or wages, or profit, the second. "You cannot," he says, "serve two masters; you must serve one or other. If your work is first with you, and your fee second, work is your master, and the Lord of work, Who is God. But if your fee is first with you, and your work second, fee is your master, and the lord of fee, who is the devil, and not only the devil, but the lowest of devils, 'the least erected fiend that fell.' So there you have it in brief terms. Work first—you are God's servants; fee first—you are the Fiend's. And it makes a difference, now and ever, believe me, whether you

serve Him Who has on His vesture and thigh written, 'King of kings,' and Whose service is perfect freedom, or him on whose vesture and thigh the name is written, 'Slave of slaves,' and whose service is perfect slavery."

And what Ruskin preached he practised. He who pointed to the path of self-abnegation himself led the way. The great wealth he inherited from his father he gave to the public or the poor. The vast sums his books brought him he devoted to founding museums, enriching public galleries, and supporting poor students. He gave his time to forming associations for mutual help and enlightenment, to showing workmen how to work, and young girls how to draw, and University students how to make life worth living. His own life work was to try and build up a beautiful world, and as the result of it all a deep change has, in many respects, passed over the nation, a deeper love of beauty, a keener appreciation of the world of nature, and of the importance of art; a new sense of the greatness of the inheritance to which we are all the heirs, and of its possibilities, and with it all a keen realization of the need for truth, honesty, purity, sincerity, and faithfulness in all the relations of life. "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there be any virtue (or valour), and if there be any praise," he has made us think on these things.

THE END.



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